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**English Literature Series for Schools**  
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## THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON



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Medea persuades King Pelias and his daughters that she can restore his youth by magic arts: she proves her powers by restoring life to a ram  
(*Attic vase-painting of the sixth century B.C., in the British Museum.*)

# The Life and Death of Jason *A Poem*

By  
William Morris

*Abridged and Edited for Schools by*

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ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

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### FRONTISPICE

Medea persuades King Pelias and his daughters that she can restore his youth by magic arts : she proves her powers by restoring life to a ram. (Attic vase-painting of the sixth century B.C., in the British Museum.)

### NOTE

The numbering of the first nine books in this edition corresponds with the numbering in the complete work. Books VII., VIII., IX. are given in full. Book X. in this volume comprises extracts from Books 10, 11, 12 of the complete work ; Books XI. and XII correspond to parts of Books 14 and 16 respectively, and Books XIII. and XIV. are parts of Book 17 in the original.

# INTRODUCTION

## I. THE POEM

In modern times, when a man wishes to tell a story or paint a picture of ancient days, he tries to find out what the people of those days looked like, their clothes, their armour, their houses and temples, and to reproduce these details accurately in his story or picture. That is because in modern times, as a result of increasing knowledge, the ‘historic sense’ has been developed ; enormous pains are taken to distinguish the characteristics of different ages.

But this way of looking at things is altogether modern. The great Italian painters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when they painted the scenes of the New Testament, never thought of asking what Palestine was like, or what garments people wore in the time of Christ. They painted the Apostles in the costumes of their own time, with a background of Tusean or Umbrian hills. So too in England, when Chaucer told an old Greek story, he unconsciously turned the Greek warriors into mediaeval knights with mediaeval castles, because these were the warriors familiar to him. And you remember that in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, the conspirators wear Elizabethan cloaks and Elizabethan clocks strike the hour.

Now William Morris lived in the nineteenth century, when the more accurate study of ancient times was beginning, and you might expect him to observe the newer methods. But he did not. The reason was this. He was a great lover of Chaucer and of the Middle Ages, and he had soaked himself in them so completely that, when he pictured to himself the scenes and incidents

of this old Greek story of Jason, he saw them all through the eyes, as it were, of Chaucer and the men of the Middle Ages in England.

It is a curious kind of confusion, if we like to call it so, but Morris's absorption in the mediæval world is so genuine that the result—a blending of three ages—the combination of an ancient Greek story with mediaeval surroundings and with the modern love of Nature which Morris brought in from his own generation—is a poem of great charm. We have no unpleasant feeling that the combination is artificial. Morris's genius has transported us into an imaginative world of his own creation, a land of dreams beside which the creations of our own fancy appear vague, dull and drab. The pictures he calls up for us stand out vivid and clear ; they are full of wonderful colour and of imaginative detail accurately and lovingly drawn ; and the atmosphere that pervades them is as fresh as that of a June morning in the ‘rose-hung lanes of woody Kent’ of Chaucer’s day.

In the story itself will be found most of the familiar ingredients of Romance. Its central motive, that of a Quest, is contained in all romances. It is also not an uncommon resource to add further zest to the adventure by making the seekers ignorant of the exact conditions attaching to its accomplishment, and by adding a love interest and making the hero depend upon his lover’s aid to achieve success. Another common feature is the interposition of minor incidents by the way to retard the action and whet the reader’s appetite for the final issue. Witchcraft and divine interference are often introduced to add mystery and complications. The wronged heir, the wicked uncle, the ill-used wife, the monster to be exterminated, the conquest of seemingly insuperable obstacles, the performance of superhuman tasks, the traversing of unknown and barbarous tracts—the story of Jason contains them all.

In the art of telling a story Morris was a deft master. Even when dulness and monotony would appear to be unavoidable, he keeps his readers enlivened with side incidents and bits of characterization and scenic description, in which he gives his inventiveness full play. He carries us on from adventure to adventure with an ease and rapidity that surprise us. The quality of his

poetry, with its even flow of excellence, materially helps to produce this effect.

Morris was a craftsman, and plied many crafts with skill and success. Poetry, too, he regarded as a craft—thus reverting to the original idea of the Greek word *poiesis*. He scoffed at poetic inspiration, and spoke of ‘making’ poetry as he would of carving the back of a chair or of weaving tapestry. Indeed, his narrative poetry has the same characteristics as tapestry—each episode a panel dexterously woven with the clear high lights and deep shadows, the skilfully contrasted primary colours and exactitude of detail, of old Flemish tapestries or of the paintings of Morris’s own friends the Pre-Raphaelite artists. The *Life and Death of Jason* is a rapid succession of enchanting pictures of which vivid impressions will remain long in the reader’s mind.

## II. LIFE AND WORK OF WILLIAM MORRIS

William Morris was born on the 24th of March, 1834, at Woodford Hall on the northern outskirts of Epping Forest. In his early years here and at Marlborough College he learned to study and appreciate Nature, and to acquire an intimacy with her moods and changes that is reflected in all his works. In 1853 he went up to Exeter College, Oxford, where he began a life-long friendship with Edward Burne-Jones. Together they caught the spirit of mediaeval Romance in the pages of Malory and Spenser, and they were the central figures in a small circle of friends who met to read and discuss poetry. They also published a monthly paper—the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*—in which Morris’s early poetical efforts first appeared.

At the end of his University career, Morris became apprenticed to an architect in Oxford. Meanwhile Burne-Jones had gone to London to study painting. Both young men came under the influence of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood—a band of painters, of whom Rossetti, Millais and Holman Hunt were the chief, who were in revolt against the conventional art-standards of the day. In 1857 Morris threw up his architect’s work and devoted himself to painting. But if he was not destined to practise as an architect, it was in design, and not in painting, that his natural bent lay.

In 1859 he married, and after marriage came the problem of obtaining a house and furnishing and decorating it. To this we owe the beginnings of a project which was to engage the main course of Morris's activities for the remainder of his life. The domestic architecture, furniture and upholstery of the time were ugly, pretentious and vulgar, and Morris found it impossible to obtain even a simple article—a chair or a table—that combined usefulness and durability with beauty of design. Hence came the inauguration in 1861 of the firm of 'Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co., Fine Art Workmen in Painting, Carving, Furniture and the Metals.' Many of his Oxford friends were associated in this enterprise, as well as Rossetti and Ford Madox Brown, but Morris was the moving spirit and the most indefatigable worker among them all. Furniture, glass, embroidery and tiles were first produced, but paper-hangings, chintzes, carpets, tapestries, dyeing and stained-glass were taken in hand one after the other with striking success. Morris combined skill in designing with a remarkable aptitude for handicraft of every kind. As each new industry was undertaken, he quickly mastered its technicalities and made valuable contributions to its development, and at the same time helped to improve the public taste.

Seldom has genius been so versatile. He was a poet as well as a craftsman, and refused the Professorship of Poetry at Oxford and the Poet Laureateship which was offered to him on Tennyson's death. But Poetry was only another craft to Morris. His first volume of poems, *The Defence of Guinevere*, was published in 1858, but was indifferently received. In 1866, when the work of Morris & Co. was well under way, he began planning and writing a series of romances called *The Earthly Paradise*. The first tale to be completed was *The Life and Death of Jason*, which had grown so long that it was published separately in 1867 ; the remainder followed during the next three years. His other great poetical achievement, *Sigurd the Volsung*, stories drawn from the Norse Sagas, was the result of a visit to Iceland, and was published in 1876.

The publication of the *Earthly Paradise* led Morris to take up another craft—the production of books. The manufacture of paper, the cutting of type, illumination and illustration, all

engaged his attention. He founded the Kelmscott Press in 1891. His finest achievement was his edition of Chaucer, perhaps one of the most beautiful books ever printed and a fitting tribute to his immortal Master.

There is a later phase of Morris's life still to be touched upon. In 1883 he avowed himself a Socialist. Morris seems to be a mass of contradictions : one would hardly have expected a man of his artistic instincts and aristocratic tastes to have become a convert to Socialism. Nor did he merely sympathise passively with its doctrines : he founded an association, addressed meetings up and down the country and harangued at street-corners like a professed politician. He wrote incessantly in aid of the cause, and to this period (1883-1896) belongs the series of prose romances of which the best known are the *Dream of John Ball* and *News from Nowhere*, the latter a description of a socialistic Utopia.

In the midst of all this bewildering variety of activities, it is possible to discern in Morris one element which gives unity to his whole life and work—the passion for beauty. Beauty he strove after always, whether in a poem, a piece of furniture, a story, a stained-glass window, or in the organisation of society. This explains his love of the Middle Ages, when men felt a natural hunger after beauty, and unconsciously strove to satisfy it in their making of useful things, so stamping them with their own personality. It is not surprising that, with these ideals, Morris railed at modern Industrialism which had turned the pleasant English countryside into a ‘smoky net’ of dingy houses and factory chimneys, had degraded the craftsman till he became a mere cog in a vast inhuman machine, and in the pursuit of material welfare had lost sight of beauty altogether.

Four years of arduous, heart-breaking effort in the Socialist cause undermined his health, and he completely broke down in 1891. He survived to put the finishing touches to his beloved *Chaucer*, and died in 1896 at the age of sixty-two.

W. S. Gilbert in one of his lyrics draws an amusing and satirical picture of the Aesthete who used, two generations ago, to languish in society drawing-rooms or

‘ . . . walk down Piccadilly, with a poppy or a lily  
In his mediaeval hand.’

Morris, although the leader of what was virtually an Aesthetic Revival, was just the opposite type. There was no languishing about him. He thought nothing of devouring six eggs for breakfast. In his everyday clothes of blue serge, with a coarse flannel shirt open at the neck and a shapeless soft hat, he might have been taken for a ship's bos'n. He was a burly figure, and his voice was deep and resonant. His humour was boisterous, his temper violently explosive. Vehemence was stamped upon him and all that he did. He loved life and work and gave himself to both with the zest of a never-failing youthfulness.

## TO CHAUCER

(From the beginning of Book XVII.)

Would that I  
Had but some portion of that mastery  
That from the rose-hung lanes of woody Kent  
Through these five hundred years such songs have sent  
To us, who, mesh'd within this smoky net  
Of unrejoicing labour, love them yet.  
And thou, O Master!—Yea, my Master still,  
Whatever feet have scaled Parnassus' hull,  
Since like thy measures, clear and sweet and strong,  
Thames' stream scarce fettered drove the dace along  
Unto the bastioned bridge, his only chain.—  
O Master, pardon me, if yet in vain  
Thou art my Master, and I fail to bring  
Before men's eyes the image of the thing  
My heart is filled with.



# THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON

## I. HIS BOYHOOD

In Thessaly, on the sea-coast, stood the city of Iolchos, peopled by the Minyae. Their former king, *Æson*, thrust from his throne by his half-brother Pelias, dwelt in obscurity among them. Anxious for the safety of his son Jason, still a mere babe, he entrusted him to the care of the centaur Chiron, who lived in the woods that girt Mount Pelion. Meantime, Pelias, fearful of the wrath of Juno, consulted the oracle at Dodona and was warned of the coming of ‘the half-shod man.’ (Book I, 1-222.)

And yet indeed were all these things but vain,  
For at the foot of Pelion grew his bane  
In strength and comeliness from day to day,  
And swiftly passed his childish years away :  
Unto whom Chiron taught the worthy lore  
Of elders who the wide world filled before ;  
And how to forge his iron arrow-heads ;  
And how to find within the marshy steads  
The stoutest reeds, and from some slain bird’s wing  
To feather them, and make a deadly thing ;                           10  
And through the woods he took him, nor would spare  
To show him how the just-awakened bear  
Came hungry from his tree, or show him how  
The spotted leopard’s lurking-place to know ;

And many a time they brought the har' to bay,  
Or smote the boar at hottest of the day.

Now was his dwelling-place a fair-hewn cave,  
Facing the south : thereto the herdsmen drove  
Full oft to Chiron woolly shcep, and neat,  
And brought him wine and garden-honey sweet,      20  
And fruits that flourish well in the fat plain,  
And cloth and linen, and would take again  
Skins of slain beasts, and little lumps of gold,  
Washed from the high crags : then would Chiron hold,  
Upon the sunny lawns, high feast with them,  
And garland all about the ancient stem  
Of some great tree, and there do sacrifice  
Unto the Gods, and with grave words and wise  
Tell them sweet tales of elders passed away :  
But for some wished thing every man would pray      30  
Or ever in their hands the steel did shine,  
And or the sun lit up the bubbling wine ;  
Then would they fall to meat, nor would they leave  
Their joyances, until the dewy eve  
Had given good heart unto the nightingale  
To tell the sleepy wood-nymphs all his tale.

Moreover, Chiron taught him how to cast  
His hand across the lyre, until there passed  
Such sweetness through the woods, that all about  
The wood-folk gathered, and the merry rout      40  
That called on Bacchus, hearkening, stayed awhile,  
And in the chase the hunter, with a smile,  
From his raised hand let fall the noisy horn,  
When to his ears the sweet strange sound was borne.

In such wise Jason grew up to manhood. One day, whilst wandering in the woods, he met a lovely huntress who told of the fame that was in store for him and bade him go to Iolchos to claim his own. He was strangely stirred and longed to leave his woodland home. Chiron, hearing his story, told

him the huntress was none other than the Queen of the gods  
who would watch over him all his life. He bade him obey  
her behest, but to wait until the threatened storm had passed.  
(Book I, 267-end.)

## II. HIS RETURN TO IOLCHOS

So there they lay until the second dawn  
Broke fair and fresh o'er glittering glade and lawn ;  
Then Jason rose, and did on him a fair  
Blue woollen tunic, such as folk do wear  
On the Magnesian cliffs, and at his thigh  
An iron-hilted sword hung carefully ;  
And on his head he had a russet hood ;  
And in his hand two spears of cornel-wood,  
Well steeled and bound with brazen bands, he shook.

Then from the Centaur's hands at last he took                   10  
The tokens of his birth, the ring and horn,  
And so stept forth into the sunny morn,  
And bade farewell to Chiron, and set out  
With eager heart, that held small care or doubt.

So lightly through the well-known woods he passed,  
And came out to the open plain at last,  
And went till night came on him, and then slept  
Within a homestead that a poor man kept ;  
And rose again at dawn, and slept that night  
Nigh the Anaurus, and at morrow's light                   20  
Rose up and went unto the river's brim ;  
But fearful seemed the passage unto him,  
For swift and yellow drove the stream adown  
'Twixt crumbling banks ; and tree-trunks rough and brown  
Whirled in the bubbling eddies here and there ;  
So swollen was the stream a maid might dare  
To cross, in fair days, with unwetted knee.

Then Jason with his spear-shaft carefully  
 Sounded the depth, nor any bottom found ;  
 And wisely he cast his eyes around                           30  
 To see if help was nigh, and heard a voice  
 Behind him, calling out, ‘ Fair youth, rejoice  
 That I am here to help, or certainly  
 Long time a dweller hereby shouldst thou be.’

Then Jason turned round quickly, and beheld  
 A woman, bent with burdens and with eld,  
 Grey and broad shouldered ; so he laughed, and said :  
 ‘ O mother, wilt thou help me ? by my head,  
 More help than thine I need upon this day.’

‘ O son,’ she said, ‘ needs must thou on thy way ;                   40  
 And is there any of the giants here  
 To bear thee through this water without fear ?  
 Take, then, the help a God has sent to thee,  
 For in mine arms a small thing shalt thou be.’

So Jason laughed no more, because a frown  
 Gathered upon her brow, as she cast down  
 Her burden to the earth, and came a-nigh,  
 And raised him in her long arms easily,  
 And stept adown into the water cold.

There with one arm the hero did she hold,                           50  
 And with the other thrust the whirling trees  
 Away from them ; and laughing, and with ease  
 Went through the yellow foaming stream, and came  
 Unto the other bank ; and little shame  
 Had Jason that a woman carried him,  
 For no man, howsoever strong of limb,  
 Had dared across that swollen stream to go,  
 But if he wished the Stygian stream to know ;  
 Therefore he doubted not, that with some God  
 Or reverend Goddess that rough way he trod.                           60

So when she had clomb up the slippery bank,  
 And let him go, well-nigh adown he sank,  
 For he was dizzy with the washing stream,

And with that passage mazed as with a dream.

But, turning round about unto the crone,  
He saw not her, but a most glorious one,  
A lady clad in blue, all glistering  
With something more than gold, crowned like the king  
Of all the world, and holding in her hand  
A jewelled rod. So when he saw her stand  
With unsoled feet scarce touching the wet way,  
He trembled sore, but therewith heard her say :—

‘ O Jason, such as I have been to thee  
Upon this day, such ever will I be ;  
And I am Juno ; therefore doubt thou not  
A mighty helper henceforth thou hast got  
Against the swords and bitter tongues of men,  
For surely mayst thou lean upon me, when  
The turbulent and little-reasoning throng  
Press hard upon thee, or a king with wrong  
Would fain undo thee, as thou leanedst now  
Within the yellow stream : so from no blow  
Hold back thine hand, nor fear to set thine heart  
On what thou deemest fits thy kingly part.

‘ Now to the king’s throne this day draw anear,  
Because of old time have I set a fear  
Within his heart, ere yet thou hadst gained speech,  
And whilst thou wanderedst beneath oak and beech  
Unthinking. And, behold ! so have I wrought,  
That with thy coming shall a sign be brought  
Unto him ; for the latchet of thy shoe  
Rushing Anaurus late I bade undo,  
Which now is carried swiftly to the sea.

‘ So Pelias, this day setting eyes on thee,  
Shall not forget the shameful trickling blood  
Adown my altar-steps, or in my wood  
The screaming peacocks scared by other screams,  
Nor yet to-night shall he dream happy dreams.

‘ Farewell then, and be joyful, for I go

\* Unto the people, many a thing to show,  
And set them longing for forgotten things,  
Whose rash hands toss about the crowns of kings.'

Therewith before his eyes a cloud there came,  
Sweet-smelling, coloured like a rosy flame,  
That wrapt the Goddess from him ; who, indeed,  
Went to Iolchos, and there sowed the seed  
Of bitter change, that ruins kings of men ;  
For, like an elder of threescore and ten,  
Throughout the town she went, and, as such do,  
Ever she blessed the old, and banned the new ;  
Lamenting for the passed and happy reign  
Of Cretheus, wishing there were come again  
One like to him ; till in the market-place  
About the king was many a doubtful face.

Now Jason, by Anaurus left alone,  
Found that, indeed, his right-foot shoe was gone,  
But, as the Goddess bade him, went his way  
Half shod, and by an hour before mid-day  
He reached the city gates, and entered there,  
Whom the folk mocked, beholding his foot bare,  
And iron-hilted sword, and uncouth weed :  
But of no man did he take any heed,  
But came into the market-place, where thronged  
Much folk about him who his sire had wronged.  
But when he stood within that busy stead,  
Taller he showed than any by a head,  
Great limbed, broad shouldered, mightier than all,  
But soft of speech, though unto him did fall  
Full many a scorn upon that day to get.

So in a while he came where there was set  
Pelias, the king, judging the people there ;  
In scarlet was he clad, and o'er his hair,  
Sprinkled with grey, he wore a royal crown,  
And from an ivory throne he looked adown  
Upon the suitors and the restless folk.

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Now, when the yellow head of Jason broke  
From out the throng, with fearless eyes and grey,  
A terror took the king, that ere that day  
For many a peaceful year he had not felt,  
And his hand fell upon his swordless belt ;  
But when the hero strode up to the throne,  
And set his unshod foot upon the stone  
Of the last step thereof, and as he stood,  
Drew off the last fold of his russet hood,  
And with a clang let fall his brass-bound spear,  
The king shrunk back, grown pale with deadly fear ;  
Nor then the oak-trees' speech did he forget,  
Noting the one bare foot, and garments wet,  
And something half remembered in his face.

And now nigh silent was the crowded place,  
For through the folk remembrance Juno sent,  
And soon from man to man a murmur went,  
And frowning folk were whispering deeds of shame  
And wrong the king had wrought, and Æson's name,  
Forgotten long, was bandied all about,  
And silent mouths seemed ready for a shout.

So, when the king raised up a hand, that shook  
With fear, and turned a wrathful, timorous look  
On his Ætolian guards, upon his ears  
There fell the clashing of the people's spears ;  
And on the house-tops round about the square  
Could he behold folk gathered here and there,  
And see the sunbeams strike on brass and steel.  
But therewithal, though new fear did he feel,  
He thought, ' Small use of arms in this distress,—  
Needs is it that I use my wiliness ; '  
Then spoke aloud : ' O man, what wouldest thou here,  
That bearest thus a king with little fear ? '

' Pelias,' he said, ' I will not call thee king,  
Because thy crown is but a stolen thing,  
And with a stolen sceptre dost thou reign,

Which now I bid thee render up again,  
 And on his father's throne my father set,  
 Whom for long years the Gods did well forget,  
 But now, in lapse of time, remembering,  
 Have raised me, Jason, up to do this thing,  
 His son, and son of fair Alcimidé ;  
 Yet now, since Tyro's blood 'twixt thee and me  
 Still runs, and thou my father's brother art,  
 In no wise would I hurt thee, for my part,  
 If thou wilt render to us but our own,  
 And still shalt thou stand nigh my father's throne.'

Then all the people, when aright they knew,  
 That this was *Æson*'s son, about them drew,  
 And when he ended gave a mighty shout ;  
 But Pelias cleared his face of fear and doubt,  
 And answered Jason, smiling cunningly :—

‘ Yea, in good time thou comest unto me,  
 My nephew Jason ; fain would I lay down  
 This heavy weight and burden of a crown,  
 And have instead my brother's love again,  
 I lost, to win a troublous thing and vain ;  
 And yet, since now thou shovest me such goodwill,  
 Fain would I be a king a short while still.  
 That everything in order I may set,  
 Nor any man thereby may trouble get.  
 And now I bid thee stand by me to-day,  
 And cast all fear and troublous thoughts away ;  
 And for thy father *Æson* will I send,  
 That I may see him as a much-loved friend,  
 Now that these years of bitterness are passed,  
 And peaceful days are come to me at last.’

With that, from out the press grave *Æson* came  
 E'en as he spoke ; for to his ears the fame  
 Of Jason's coming thither had been brought ;  
 Wherefore, with eager eyes his son he sought ;  
 But, seeing the mighty hero great of limb,

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Stopped short, with eyes set wistfully on him,  
While a false honied speech the king began :  
‘ Hail, brother Æson, hail, O happy man !                          210  
To-day thou winnest back a noble son,  
Whose glorious deeds this fair hour sees begun,  
And from my hands thou winnest back the crown  
Of this revered and many-peopled town ;  
So let me win from thee again thy love,  
Nor with long anger slight the Gods above.’

Then Jason, holding forth the horn and ring,  
Said to his father, ‘ Doubtest thou this thing ?  
Behold the tokens Chiron gave to me  
When first he said that I was sprung from thee.’                          220

Then little of those signs did Æson reck,  
But cast his arms about the hero’s neck,  
And kissed him oft, remembering well the time  
When as he sat beneath the flowering lime  
Beside his house, the glad folk to him came  
And said : ‘ O King, all honour to thy name  
That will not perish surely, for thy son  
His royal life this day has just begun.’

Pelias gave a feast in Jason’s honour that night, and recounted how their kinsman Phryxus was by a miracle borne away to far Colchis on the back of the Golden-fleeced Ram and was treacherously slain by Æetes, the Colchian king. He challenged Jason to avenge the foul deed, give Phryxus’ bones a Grecian burial and recover the Golden Fleece—a cunning wile to rid him of the rightful claimant to his throne. Jason accepted the challenge and bade Pelias send heralds throughout Hellas to announce the quest and to invite lovers of adventure to join in it. (Book II, 229-end.)

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## III. THE QUEST BEGINS

Now the next morn, when risen was the sun,  
Men 'gan to busk them for the quest begun ;  
Nor long delay made Pelias, being in fear  
Lest aught should stay them ; so his folk did bear  
News of these things throughout the towns of Greece,  
Moving great men to seek the golden fleece.

Therefore, from many a lordship forth they rode,  
Leaving both wife and child and loved abode,  
And many a town must now be masterless,  
And women's voices rule both more and less,  
And women's hands be dreaded, far and wide,  
This fair beginning of the summer-tide.

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First came Argus, a cunning wood-craftsman, who built the good ship Argo to carry the heroes on their quest. The prow he fashioned from a pillar in the royal hall once cut from the magic speaking oak of Dodona. Next came Polyphemus, Erginus the son of Neptune, Theseus, Atalanta the swift huntress, Tiphys the pilot, Hercules with his young companions Hylas and Ephesus, the twins Castor and Pollux, the keen-eyed Lynceus, Zetes and Calais the North Wind's sons, Asclepius the healer, and many others. Last of all came Orpheus, unrivalled for the sweetness of his song. Jason assembled the goodly company and thus addressed them : (Book III, 13-531).

' Fair friends and well-loved guests, no more shall ye  
Feast in this hall until we come again  
Back to this land, well-guerdoned for our pain,  
Bearing the fleece, and mayhap many a thing  
Such as this god-like guest erewhile did sing,  
Scarlet, and gold, and brass ; but without fail  
Bearing great fame, if aught that may avail

To men who die ; and our names certainly 20  
Shall never perish, whereso'er we lie.

' And now behold within the haven rides  
Our good ship, swinging in the changing tides,  
Gleaming with gold, and blue, and cinnabar,  
The long new oars beside the rowlocks are,  
The sail hangs flapping in the light west wind,  
Nor aught undone can any craftsman find  
From stem to stern : so is our quest begun  
To-morrow at the rising of the sun.  
And may Jove bring us all safe back to see 30  
Another sun shine on this fair city,  
When elders and the flower-crowned maidens meet  
With tears and singing our returning feet.'

So spake he, and so mighty was the shout,  
That the hall shook, and shepherd-folk without  
The well-walled city heard it as they went  
Unto the fold across the thymy bent.

But through the town few eyes were sealed by sleep  
When the sun rose : yea, and the upland sheep  
Must guard themselves for that one morn at least, 40  
Against the wolf ; and wary doves may feast  
Unscared that morning on the ripening corn.  
Nor did the whetstone touch the scythe that morn ;  
And all unheeded did the mackerel shoal  
Make green the blue waves, or the porpoise roll  
Through changing hills and valleys of the sea.

For 'twixt the thronging people solemnly  
The heroes went afoot along the way  
That led unto the haven of the bay,  
And as they went the roses rained on them  
From windows glorious with the well-wrought hem 50  
Of many a purple cloth ; and all their spears  
Were twined with flowers that the fair earth bears ;

And round their ladies' tokens were there set  
About their helmets, flowery wreaths, still wet  
With beaded dew of the scarce vanished night.

So as they passed, the young men at the sight  
Shouted for joy, and their hearts swelled with pride ;  
But scarce the elders could behold dry-eyed  
The glorious show, remembering well the days  
When they were able too to win them praise,  
And in their hearts was hope of days to come. 60

Nor could the heroes leave their fathers' home  
Unwept of damsels, who henceforth must hold  
The empty air unto their bosoms cold,  
And make their sweet complainings to the night  
That heedeth not soft eyes and bosoms white.  
And many such an one was there that morn,  
Who, with lips parted and grey eyes forlorn,  
Stood by the window and forgot to cast  
Her gathered flowers as the heroes passed,  
But held them still within her garment's hem,  
Though many a wingèd wish she sent to them. 70

But on they went, and as the way they trod,  
His swelling heart nigh made each man a god ;  
While clashed their armour to the minstrelsy  
That went before them to the doubtful sea.

And now, the streets being passed, they reached the bay,  
Where by the well-built quay long Argo lay,  
Glorious with gold, and shining in the sun. 80  
Then first they shouted, and each man begun  
Against his shield to strike his brazen spear ;  
And as along the quays they drew a-near,  
Faster they strode and faster, till a cry  
Again burst from them, and right eagerly  
Into swift running did they break at last,  
Till all the wind-swept quay being overpast,  
They pressed across the gangway, and filled up  
The hollow ship as wine a golden cup.

But Jason, standing by the helmsman's side  
High on the poop, lift up his voice and cried :—

‘ Look landward, heroes, once, before ye slip  
The tough well-twisted hawser from the ship,  
And set your eager hands to rope or oar ;  
For now, behold, the king stands on the shore  
Beside a new-built altar, while the priests  
Lead up a hecatomb of spotless beasts,  
White bulls and coal-black horses, and my sire  
Lifts up the barley-cake above the fire ;  
And in his hand a cup of ruddy gold  
King Pelias takes ; and now may ye behold  
The broad new-risen sun light up the God,  
Who, holding in his hand the crystal rod  
That rules the sea, stands by Dædalian art  
Above his temple, set right far apart  
From other houses, nigh the deep green sea.

‘ And now, O fellows, from no man but me  
These gifts come to the God, that, ere long years  
Have drowned our laughter and dried up our tears,  
We may behold that glimmering brazen God  
Against the sun bear up his crystal rod  
Once more, and once more cast upon this land  
This cable, severed by my bloodless brand.’

So spake he, and raised up the glittering steel,  
That fell, and seaward straight did Argo reel,  
Set free, and smitten by the western breeze,  
And raised herself against the ridgy seas,  
With golden eyes turned toward the Colchian land,  
Still heedful of wise Tiphys' skilful hand.

But silent sat the heroes by the oar,  
Hearkening the sounds borne from the lessening shore ;  
The lowing of the doomed and flower-crowned beasts,  
The plaintive singing of the ancient priests,  
Mingled with blare of trumpets, and the sound

Of all the many folk that stood around  
 The altar and the temple by the sea.  
 So sat they pondering much and silently,  
 Till all the landward noises died away,  
 And, midmost now of the green sunny bay,  
 They heard no sound but washing of the seas  
 And piping of the following western breeze,  
 And heavy measured beating of the oars :  
 So left the Argo the Thessalian shores.

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Now Neptune, joyful of the sacrifice  
 Beside the sea, and all the gifts of price  
 That Jason gave him, sent them wind at will,  
 And swiftly Argo climbed each changing hill,  
 And ran through rippling valleys of the sea ;  
 Nor toiled the heroes unmelodiously,  
 For by the mast sat great Æager's son,  
 And through the harp-strings let his fingers run  
 Nigh soundless, and with closed lips for a while ;  
 But soon across his face there came a smile,  
 And his glad voice brake into such a song  
 That swiftlier sped the eager ship along.

140

‘ O bitter sea, tumultuous sea,  
 Full many an ill is wrought by thee !—  
 Unto the wasters of the land  
 Thou holdest out thy wrinkled hand ;  
 And when they leave the conquered town,  
 Whose black smoke makes thy surges brown,  
 Driven betwixt thee and the sun,  
 As the long day of blood is done,  
 From many a league of glittering waves  
 Thou smilest on them and their slaves.

150

‘ The thin bright-eyed Phœnician  
 Thou drawest to thy waters wan.  
 With ruddy eve and golden morn

Thou temptest him, until, forlorn,  
Unburied, under alien skies  
Cast up ashore his body lies.

‘ Yea, whoso sees thee from his door,  
Must ever long for more and more ;  
Nor will the beechen bowl suffice,  
Or homespun robe of little price,  
Or hood well-woven of the fleece  
Undyed, or unspiced wine of Greece ;  
So sore his heart is set upon  
Purple, and gold, and cinnamon ;  
For as thou cravest, so he craves,  
Until he rolls beneath thy waves,  
Nor in some landlocked, unknown bay,  
Can satiate thee for one day.

‘ Now, therefore, O thou bitter sea,  
With no long words we pray to thee,  
But ask thee, hast thou felt before  
Such strokes of the long ashen oar ?  
And hast thou yet seen such a prow  
Thy rich and niggard waters plough ?

‘ Nor yet, O sea, shalt thou be cursed,  
If at thy hands we gain the worst,  
And, wrapt in water, roll about,  
Blind-eyed, unheeding song or shout,  
Within thine eddies far from shore,  
Warmed by no sunlight any more.

‘ Therefore, indeed, we joy in thee,  
And praise thy greatness, and will we  
Take at thy hands both good and ill,  
Yea, what thou wilt, and praise thee still,  
Enduring not to sit at home,  
And wait until the last days come,  
When we no more may care to hold  
White bosoms under crowns of gold,

And our dulled hearts no longer are  
 Stirred by the clangorous noise of war,  
 And hope within our souls is dead,  
 And no joy is remembered.

‘So, if thou hast a mind to slay,  
 Fair prize thou hast of us to-day ;  
 And if thou hast a mind to save,  
 Great praise and honour shalt thou have ;  
 But whatso thou wilt do with us,  
 Our end shall not be piteous,  
 Because our memories shall live  
 When folk forget the way to drive  
 The black keel through the heaped-up sea,  
 And half dried up thy waters be.’

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#### IV. THE LOSS OF HYLAS

They skirted the isle of Lemnos : there the women-folk had put all the males to the sword, save one who took to the sea for refuge and was taken aboard by the Argonauts. (Book IV, 171-359.)

Meanwhile, along the high cliffs Argo ran  
 Until a fresh land-wind began to rise,  
 Then did they set sail, and in goodly wise  
 Draw off from Lemnos, and at close of day  
 Again before them a new country lay,  
 Which when they neared, the helmsman Tiphys knew  
 To be the Mysian land ; being come thereto,  
 They saw a grassy shore and trees enow,  
 And a sweet stream that from the land did flow ;  
 Therefore they thought it good to land thereon  
 And get them water ; but, the day being gone,  
 They anchored till the dawn anigh the beach,  
 Till the sea’s rim the golden sun did reach.

10

But when the day dawned, most men left the ship,  
Some hastening the glazed water-jars to dip  
In the fresh water ; others among these  
Who had good will beneath the murmuring trees  
To sit awhile, forgetful of the sea.

And with the sea-farers there landed three  
Amongst the best, Alcmena's godlike son,

20

Hylas the fair, and that half-halting one,

Great Polyphemus. Now both Hercules

And all the others lay beneath the trees,

When all the jars were filled, nor wandered far ;

But Hylas, governed by some wayward star,

Strayed from them, and up stream he set his face.

And came unto a tangled woody place,

From whence the stream came, and within that wood

Along its bank wandered in heedless mood,

Nor knew it haunted of the sea-nymphs fair,

30

Whom on that morn the heroes' noise did scare

From their abiding-place anigh the bay ;

But these now hidden in the water lay

Within the wood, and thence could they behold

The fair-limbed Hylas, with his hair of gold,

And mighty arms down-swinging carelessly,

And fresh face, ruddy from the wind-swept sea ;

Then straight they loved him, and, being fain to have  
His shapely body in the glassy wave,

And taking counsel there, they thought it good

40

That one should meet him in the darksome wood,

And by her wiles should draw him to some place

Where they his helpless body might embrace.

So from the water stole a fair nymph forth,

And by her art so wrought, that from the north

You would have thought her come, from where a queen

Rules over lands summer alone sees green ;

For she in goodly raiment, furred, was clad,

And on her head a golden fillet had,

Strange of its fashion, and about her hone  
Many a fair jewel and outlandish stone.

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So in the wood, anigh the river side,  
The coming of the Theban did she bide,  
Nor waited long, for slowly pushing through  
The close-set saplings, o'er the flowers blue  
He drew nigh, singing, free from any care ;  
But when he saw her glittering raiment fair  
Betwixt the green tree-trunks, he stayed a space,  
For she, with fair hands covering up her face,  
Was wailing loud, as though she saw him not,  
And to his mind came old tales half forgot,  
Of women of the woods, the huntsman's bane.

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Yet with his fate indeed he strove in vain ;  
For, going further forward warily,  
From tree-trunk unto tree-trunk, he could see  
Her ivory hands, with wrist set close to wrist,  
Her cheek as fair as any God has kissed,  
Her lovely neck and wealth of golden hair,  
That from its fillet straggled here and there,  
And all her body writhing in distress,  
Wrapped in the bright folds of her golden dress.

70

Then forthwith he drew near her eagerly,  
Nor did she seem to know that he was nigh,  
Until almost his hand on her was laid ;  
Then, lifting up a pale wild face, she said,  
Struggling with sobs and shrinking from his hand :—  
‘ O, fair young warrior of a happy land,  
Harm not a queen, I pray thee, for I come  
From the far northland, where yet sits at home  
The king, my father, who, since I was wooed  
By a rich lord of Greece, had thought it good  
To send me to him with a royal train.  
But they, their hearts being changed by hope of gain,  
Seized on my goods, and left me while I slept ;  
Nor do I know, indeed, what kind God kept

80

Their traitorous hands from slaying me outright ;  
 And surely yet, the lion-haunted night  
 Shall make an end of me, who erewhile thought  
 That unto lovelier lands I was being brought,  
 To live a happier life than heretofore.

90

' But why think I of past times any more,  
 Who, a king's daughter once, am now grown fain  
 Of poorest living, through all toil and pain,  
 If so I may but live : and thou, indeed,  
 Perchance art come, some God, unto my need ;  
 For nothing less thou seemest, verily.  
 But if thou art a man, let me not die,  
 But take me as thy slave, that I may live.  
 For many a gem my raiment has to give,  
 And these weak fingers surely yet may learn  
 To turn the mill, and carry forth the urn  
 Unto the stream, nor shall my feet unshod,  
 Shrink from the flinty road and thistly sod.'

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She ceased ; but he stooped down, and stammering said :  
 ' Mayst thou be happy, O most lovely maid,  
 And thy sweet life yet know a better day :  
 And I will strive to bring thee on thy way,  
 Who am the well-loved son of a rich man  
 Who dwells in Thebes, beside Ismenus wan.'  
 Therewith he reached his hand to her, and she  
 Let her slim palm fall in it daintily ;  
 But with that touch he felt as through his blood  
 Strange fire ran, and saw not the close wood,  
 Nor tangled path, nor stream, nor aught but her  
 Crouching before him in her gold and fur,  
 With kind appealing eyes raised up to his,  
 And red lips trembling for the coming kiss.

110

But ere his lips met hers did she arise,  
 Reddening with shame, and from before his eyes  
 Drew her white hand, wherewith the robe of gold  
 She gathered up, and from her feet did hold,

120

Then through the tangled wood began to go,  
Not looking round ; but he cared not to know  
Whither they went, so only she was nigh.  
So to her side he hurried fearfully,  
She naught gainsaying, but with eyes downcast  
Still by his side betwixt the low boughs past,  
Following the stream, until a space of green  
All bare of trees they reached, and there-between  
The river ran, grown broad and like a pool,  
Along whose bank a flickering shade and cool  
Grey willows made, and all about they heard  
The warble of the small brown river bird.  
And from both stream and banks rose up a haze  
Quivering and glassy, for of summer days  
This was the chiefest day and crown of all.

There did the damsels let her long skirts fall  
Over her feet, but as her hand dropped down,  
She felt it stopped by Hylas' fingers brown,  
Whereat she trembled and began to go  
Across the flowery grass with footsteps slow,  
As though she grew aweary, and she said,  
Turning about her fair and glorious head :  
' Soft is the air in your land certainly,  
But under foot the way is rough and dry  
Unto such feet as mine, more used to feel  
The dainty stirrup wrought of gold and steel,  
Or tread upon the white bear's fell, or pass  
In spring and summer o'er such flowery grass  
As this, that soothly mindeth me too much  
Of that my worshipped feet were wont to touch,  
When I was called a queen ; let us not haste  
To leave this sweet place for the tangled waste,  
I pray thee, therefore, prince, but let us lie  
Beneath these willows while the wind goes by,  
And set our hearts to think of happy things,  
Before the morrow pain and trouble brings.'

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She faltered somewhat as she spoke, but he  
Drew up before her and took lovingly  
Her other hand, nor spoke she more to him,  
Nor he to her awhile, till, from the rim  
Of his great shield, broke off the leatherne band  
That crossed his breast, whether some demon's hand  
Snapped it unseen, or some sharp, rugged bough  
Within the wood had chafed it even now ;  
But clattering fell the buckler to the ground,  
And, startled at the noise, he turned him round,  
Then, grown all bold within that little space,  
He set his cheek unto her blushing face,  
And smiling, in a low voice said :

‘ O sweet,

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Call it an omen that this, nowise meet  
For deeds of love, has left me by its will,  
And now by mine these toys that cumber still  
My arms shall leave me.’

And therewith he threw

His brass-bound spear upon the grass, and drew  
The Theban blade from out its ivory sheath,  
And loosed his broad belt's clasp, that like a wreath  
His father's Indian serving-man had wrought,  
And cast his steel coat off, from Persia brought ;  
And so at last being freed of brass and steel,  
Upon his breast he laid her hand to feel  
The softness of the fine Phœnician stuff  
That clad it still, nor yet could toy enough  
With that fair hand ; so played they for a space,  
Till softly did she draw him to a place  
Anigh the stream, and they being set, he said :

‘ And what dost thou, O love ? art thou afraid  
To cast thine armour off, as I have done,  
Within this covert where the fiery sun  
Scarce strikes upon one jewel of your gown ? ’

190

Then she spake, reddening, with her eyes cast down :

‘ O prince, behold me as I am to-day,  
 But if o'er many a rough and weary way  
 It hap unto us both at last to come  
 Unto the happy place that is thine home,  
 Then let me be as women of thy land  
 When they before the sea-born goddess stand,  
 And not one flower hides them from her sight.’

But with that word she set her fingers white  
 Upon her belt, and he said amorously :

‘ Ah, God, whatso thou wilt must surely be,  
 But would that I might die or be asleep  
 Till we have gone across the barren deep,  
 And you and I together, hand in hand,  
 Some day ere sunrise lights the quiet land,  
 Behold once more the seven gleaming gates.’

‘ O love,’ she said, ‘ and such a fair time waits  
 Both thee and me ; but now to give thee rest,  
 Here, in the noontide, were it not the best  
 To soothe thee with some gentle murmuring song,

Sung to such notes as to our folk belong ;  
 Such as my maids awhile ago would sing  
 When on my bed a-nights I lay waking ? ’

‘ Sing on,’ he said, ‘ but let me dream of bliss  
 If I should sleep, nor yet forget thy kiss.’  
 She touched his lips with hers, and then began  
 A sweet song sung not yet to any man.

‘ I know a little garden close  
 Set thick with lily and red rose,  
 Where I would wander if I might  
 From dewy dawn to dewy night,  
 And have one with me wandering.

‘ And though within it no birds sing,  
 And though no pillared house is there,  
 And though the apple boughs are bare  
 Of fruit and blossom, would to God,

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Her feet upon the green grass trod,  
And I beheld them as before.

‘ There comes a murmur from the shore,  
And in the place two fair streams are,  
Drawn from the purple hills afar,  
Drawn down unto the restless sea ;  
The hills whose flowers ne’er fed the bee,  
The shore no ship has ever seen,  
Still beaten by the billows green,  
Whose murmur comes unceasingly  
Unto the place for which I cry.

‘ For which I cry both day and night,  
For which I let slip all delight,  
That maketh me both deaf and blind,  
Careless to win, unskilled to find,  
And quick to lose what all men seek.

‘ Yet tottering as I am, and weak,  
Still have I left a little breath  
To seek within the jaws of death  
An entrance to that happy place,  
To seek the unforgotten face  
Once seen, once kissed, once reft from me  
Anigh the murmuring of the sea.’

She ceased her song, that lower for a while  
And slower too had grown, and a soft smile  
Grew up within her eyes as still she sung.  
Then she rose up and over Hylas hung,  
For now he slept ; wherewith the God in her  
Consumed the northern robe done round with fur  
That hid her beauty, and the light west wind  
Played with her hair no fillet now did bind,  
And through her faint grey garment her limbs seemed  
Like ivory in the sea, and the sun gleamed  
In the strange jewels round her middle sweet,  
And in the jewelled sandals on her feet.

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So stood she murmuring till a rippling sound  
She heard, that grew until she turned her round  
And saw her other sisters of the deep  
Her song had called while Hylas yet did sleep,  
Come swimming in a long line up the stream,  
And their white dripping arms and shoulders gleam  
Above the dark grey water as they went,  
And still before them a great ripple sent.

But when they saw her, toward the bank they drew, 270  
And landing, felt the grass and flowers blue  
Against their unused feet ; then in a ring  
Stood gazing with wide eyes, and wondering  
At all his beauty they desired so much.  
And then with gentle hands began to touch  
His hair, his hands, his closed eyes ; and at last  
Their eager naked arms about him cast,  
And bore him, sleeping still, as by some spell,  
Unto the depths where they were wont to dwell ;  
Then softly down the reedy bank they slid, 280  
And with small noise the gurgling river hid  
The flushed nymphs and the heedless sleeping man.

But ere the water covered them, one ran  
Across the mead and caught up from the ground  
The brass-bound spear, and buckler bossed and round,  
The ivory-hilted sword, and coat of mail,  
Then took the stream ; so what might tell the tale,  
Unless the wind should tell it, or the bird  
Who from the reed these things had seen and heard ?

Polyphemus and Hercules went in search of Hylas and did not come back. Meantime, their comrades had weighed anchor, and, a gale having sprung up, were hard put to it to keep the Argo's head to wind. Then from the magic beam in the prow shone forth a light, and a voice warned the heroes not to wait, for the gods had other work for Hercules and Polyphemus to do. The storm ceased, and they were borne

along towards the straits by a favouring wind. (Book IV, 649-end.)

## V. PHINEUS AND THE HARPIES

They pass through the Hellespont in safety and land at Cyzicium, whose king, Cyzicus, received them hospitably, and on the morn sent them away laden with gifts. At dusk the breeze failed, and for a time they lay becalmed. Presently, as the night grew dark, a gale arose and drove them, blind and helpless, back upon their course. When the wind died, having anchored in some shallow bay, they were espied by watchers on the shore, who took them for pirates and raised the alarm. The Argonauts, leaping overboard, closed with their unseen foes, and Jason slew their leader with his own hand. The rest took to the woods. When day dawned the heroes knew the place as Cyzicium, and to their grief found they had slain the king at whose hands they had fared so well. Straightway they built a funeral pyre, and burned his body with due rites, and set his ashes in a golden urn to carry back to Greece, where Jason vowed he would raise a temple to his memory. (Book V, 1-128.)

Now eastward with a fair wind as they went,  
And towards the opening of the ill sea bent  
Their daring course, Tiphys arose and said :

‘ Heroes, it seems to me that hardihead  
Helps mortal men but little, if thereto  
They join not wisdom ; now needs must we go  
Into the evil sea through blue rocks twain,  
No keel hath ever passed, although in vain  
Some rash men trying it of old, have been  
Pounded therein, as poisonous herbs and green  
Are pounded by some witch-wife on the shore  
Of Pontus,—for these two rocks evermore

Each against each are driven, and leave not  
 Across the whole strait such a little spot  
 Safe from the grinding of their mighty blows,  
 As that through which a well-aimed arrow goes  
 When archers for a match shoot at the ring.

‘ Now, heroes, do I mind me of a king  
 That dwelleth at a sea-side town of Thrace  
 That men call Salmydessa, from this place      20  
 A short day’s sail, who hidden things can tell  
 Beyond all men ; wherefore, I think it well  
 That we for counsel should now turn thereto,  
 Nor headlong to our own destruction go.’

Then all men said that these his words were good,  
 And turning, towards the Thracian coast they stood,  
 Which yet they reached not till the moonlit night  
 Was come, and from the shore the wind blew light ;  
 Then they lay to until the dawn, and then  
 Creeping along, found an abode of men      30  
 That Tiphys knew to be the place they sought.  
 Thereat they shouted, and right quickly brought  
 Fair Argo to the landing-place, and threw  
 Grapnels ashore, and landing forthwith drew  
 Unto the town, seeking Phineus the king.  
 But those they met and asked about this thing  
 Grew pale at naming him, and few words said ;  
 Nathless, they being unto the palace led,  
 And their names told, soon were they bidden in  
 To where the king sat, a man blind and thin,      40  
 And haggard beyond measure, who straightway  
 Called out aloud : ‘ Now blessed be the way  
 That led thee to me, happiest of all  
 Who from the poop see the prow rise and fall  
 And the sail bellying, and the glittering oars ;  
 And blessed be the day whereon our shores  
 First felt thy footsteps, since across the sea  
 My hope and my revenge thou bring’st with thee.’

Then Jason said : ‘ Hail. Phineus, that men call  
Wisest of men, and may all good befall  
To thee and thine, and happy mayst thou live ;  
Yet do we rather pray thee gifts to give,  
Than bring thee any gifts, for, soothly, we  
Sail, desperate men and poor, across the sea.’

Then answered Phincus : ‘ Guest, I know indeed  
What gift it is that on this day ye need,  
Which I will not withhold ; and yet, I pray,  
That ye will eat and drink with me to-day,  
Then shall ye see how wise a man am I,  
And how well-skilled to ’scape from misery.’

Therewith he groaned, and bade his folk to bring  
Such feast as ’longed unto a mighty king,  
And spread the board therewith ; who straight obeyed,  
Trembling and pale, and on the tables laid  
A royal feast most glorious in show.

Then said the king : ‘ I give you now to know  
That the Gods love me not, O guests ; therefore,  
Lest your expected feast be troubled sore,  
Eat by yourselves alone. while I sit here  
Looking for that which scarcely brings me fear  
This day, since I so long have suffered it.’

So, wondering at his words, they all did sit  
At that rich board, and ate and drank their fill ;  
But yet with little mirth indeed, for still  
Within their wondering ears the king’s words rang,  
And his blind eyes, made restless by some pang,  
They still felt on them, though no word he said.

At last he called out : ‘ Though ye be full fed,  
Sit still at table and behold me eat ;  
Then shall ye witness with what royal meat  
The Gods are pleased to feed me, since I know  
As much as they do both of things below  
And things above.’

Then, hearkening to this word,

The most of them grew doubtful and afeard  
Of what should come ; but now unto the board  
The king was led, and nigh his hand his sword,  
Two-edged and ivory-hilted, did they lay,  
And set the richest dish of all that day  
Before him, and a wine-crowned golden cup,  
And a pale, trembling servant lifted up                   90  
The cover from the dish ; then did they hear  
A wondrous rattling sound that drew anear,  
Increasing quickly : then the gilded hall  
Grew dark at noon, as though the night did fall,  
And open were all doors and windows burst,  
And such dim light gleamed out as lights the cursed  
Unto the torments behind Minos' throne :  
Dim, green, and doubtful through the hall it shone,  
Lighting up shapes no man had seen, before  
They fell, awhile ago, upon that shore.                   100

For now, indeed, the trembling Minyæ  
Beheld the daughters of the earth and sea,  
The dreadful snatchers, who like women were  
Down to the breast, with scanty coarse black hair  
About their heads, and dim eyes ringed with red,  
And bestial mouths set round with lips of lead,  
But from their gnarled necks there began to spring  
Half hair, half feathers, and a sweeping wing  
Grew out instead of arm on either side,  
And thick plumes underneath the breast did hide           110  
The place where joined the fearful natures twain.  
Grey-feathered were they else, with many a stain  
Of blood thereon, and on birds' claws they went.

These through the hall unheard-of shrieking sent,  
And rushed at Phineus, just as to his mouth  
He raised the golden cup to quench his drouth,  
And scattered the red wine, and buffeted  
The wretched king, and one, perched on his head,  
Laughed as the furies laugh, when kings come down

To lead new lives within the fiery town, 120  
And said : ‘ O Phineus, thou art lucky now  
The hidden things of heaven and hell to know ;  
Eat, happy man, and drink.’ Then did she draw  
From off the dish a gobbet with her claw,  
And held it nigh his mouth, the while he strove  
To free his arm, that one hoveing above,  
Within her filthy vulture-claws clutched tight,  
And cried out at him : ‘ Truly, in dark night  
Thou seest, Phineus, as the leopard doth.’

Then cried the third : ‘ Fool, who would fain have both  
Delight and knowledge, therefore, with blind eyes 131  
Clothe thee in purple, wrought with braveries,  
And set the pink-veined marble ’neath thy throne ;  
Then on its golden cushions sit alone,  
Hearkening thy chain-galled slaves without singing  
For joy, that they behold so many a thing.’

Then shrieked the first one in a dreadful voice :—  
‘ And I, O Phineus, bid thee to rejoice,  
That ’midst thy kno wledge still thou know’st not this—  
Whose flesh the lips, wherewith thy lips I kiss, 140  
This morn have fed on.’ Then she laughed again,  
And fawning on him, with her sisters twain  
Spread her wide wings, and hid him from the sight,  
And mixed his groans with screams of shrill delight.

Now trembling sat the seafarers, nor dared  
To use the weapons from their sheaths half-bared,  
Fearing the Gods, who there, before their eyes,  
Had shown them with what shame and miseries  
They visit impious men : yet from the board  
There started two, with shield and ready sword, 150  
The Northwind’s offspring, since, upon that day,  
Their father wrought within them in such way,  
They had no fear : but now, when Phineus knew,  
By his divine art, that the godlike two  
Were armed to help him, then from ’twixt the wings

He cried aloud : ‘ O, heroes, more than kings,  
 Strike, and fear not, but set me free to-day,  
 That ye within your brazen chests may lay  
 The best of all my treasure-house doth hold,  
 Fair linen, scarlet cloth, and well-wrought gold.’

160

Then shrieked the snatchers, knowing certainly  
 That now the time had come when they must fly  
 From pleasant Salmydessa, casting off  
 The joys they had in shameful mock and scoff.  
 So gat they from the blind king, leaving him  
 Pale and forewearied in his every limb ;  
 And, flying through the roof, they set them down  
 Above the hall-doors, ’mid the timbers brown,  
 Chattering with fury. Then the fair dyed wings  
 Opened upon the shoulders of the kings,  
 And on their heels, and shouting, they uprose,  
 And poised themselves in air to meet their foes.

170

Then here and there those loathly things did fly  
 Before the brazen shields, and swords raised high,  
 But as they flew unlucky words they cried.

The first said : ‘ Hail, O folk who wander wide,  
 Seeking a foolish thing across the sea,  
 Not heeding in what case your houses be,  
 Where now perchance the rovers cast the brand  
 Up to the roof, and leading by the hand  
 The fair-limbed women with their fettered feet  
 Pass down the sands, their hollow ship to meet.’

180

‘ Fair hap to him who weds the sorceress,’  
 The second cried, ‘ and may the just Gods bless  
 The slayer of his kindred and his name.’

‘ Luck to the toilsome seeker after fame.’  
 The third one from the open hall-door cried,  
 ‘ Fare ye well, Jason, still unsatisfied,  
 Still seeking for a better thing than best,  
 A fairer thing than fairest, without rest ;

190

Good speed, O traitor, who shall think to wed  
Soft limbs and white, and find thy royal bed  
Dripping with blood, and burning up with fire ;  
Good hap to him who henceforth ne'er shall tire  
In seeking good that ever flies his hand  
Till he lies buried in an alien land ! '

So screamed the monstrous fowl, but now the twain  
Sprung from the Northwind's loins to be their bane,  
Drew nigh unto them ; then, with huddled wings,  
Forth from the hall they gat, but evil things      200  
In flying they gave forth with weakened voice,  
Saying unto them : ' O ye men, rejoice,  
Whose bodies worms shall feed on soon or late,  
Blind slaves and foolish of unsparing fate,  
Seeking for that which ye can never get,  
Whilst life and death alike ye do forget  
In needless strife, until on some sure day,  
Death takes your scarcely tasted life away.'

Quivering their voices ceased as on they flew  
Before the swift wings of the godlike two      210  
Far over land and sea, until they were  
Anigh the isles called Strophades, and there,  
With tired wings, all voiceless did they light,  
Trembling to see anigh the armour bright  
The wind-born brothers bore, but as these drew  
Their gleaming swords and towards the monsters flew,  
From out the deep rose up a black-haired man,  
Who, standing on the white-topped waves that ran  
On towards the shore, cried : ' Heroes, turn again,  
For on this islet shall ye land in vain,      220  
But without sorrow leave the chase of these  
Who henceforth 'mid the rocky Strophades  
Shall dwell for ever, servants unto me,  
Working my will ; therefore rejoice that ye  
Win gifts and honour for your deed to-day.'

Then, even as he spoke, they saw but grey  
White-headed waves rolling where he had stood,  
Whereat they sheathed their swords, and through their blood  
A tremor ran, for now they knew that he  
Was Neptune, shaker of the earth and sea ;      230  
Therefore they turned them back unto the hall  
Where yet the others were, and ere nightfall  
Came back to Salmydessa and the king,  
And lighting down they told him of the thing.

Who, hearing them, straight lifted up his voice,  
And 'midst the shouts cried : ' Heroes, now rejoice  
With me who am delivered on this day  
From that which took all hope and joy away ;  
Therefore to feast again, until the sun  
Another glad day for us has begun,  
And then, indeed, if ye must try the sea,  
With gifts and counsel shall ye go from me ;  
Such as the Gods have given me to give ,  
And happy lives and glorious may ye live.'

They fell to feasting and on the morn, ere they gat them gone, received from Phineus a dove by whose flight they should tell if it was fated for them to pass the Clashing Rocks in safety. (Book V, 373-end, VI, 1-70.)

## VI. THE PASSAGE OF THE SYMPLEGADES AND THE LANDING AT ÆA

Now from the port passed Argo, and the wind  
Being fair for sailing, quickly left behind  
Fair Salmydessa, the kind, gainful place ;  
And so, with sail and oar, in no long space \*  
They reached the narrow ending of the sea,  
Where the wind shifted, blowing gustily

From side to side, so that their flapping sail  
 But little in the turmoil could avail ;  
 And now at last did they begin to hear  
 The pounding of the rocks ; but nothing clear                   10  
 They saw them ; for the steaming clouds of spray,  
 Cast by the meeting hammers every way,  
 Quite hid the polished bases from their sight ;  
 Unless perchance the eyes of Lynceus might  
 Just now and then behold the deep blue shine  
 Betwixt the scattering of the silver brine ;  
 But sometimes 'twixt the clouds the sun would pass  
 And show the high rocks glistening like glass,  
 Quivering, as far beneath the churned-up waves  
 Were ground together the strong arched caves,                   20  
 Wherein none dwelt, no, not the giant's brood,  
 Who fed the green sea with his lustful blood,  
 Nor were sea-devils even nurtured there,  
 Nor dared the sea-worm use them for its lair.

And now the Minyæ, as they drew anear,  
 Had been at point to turn about for fear,  
 Each man beholding his pale fellow's face,  
 Whose speech was silenced in that dreadful place  
 By the increasing clamour of the sea  
 And adamantine rocks ; then verily                           30  
 Was Juno good at need, who set strange fire  
 In Jason's heart, and measureless desire  
 To be the first of men, and made his voice  
 Clear as that herald's, whose sweet words rejoice  
 The Gods within the flowery fields of Heaven,  
 And gave his well-knit arm the strength of seven.  
 So then, above the crash and thundering,  
 The Minyæ heard his shrill, calm voice, crying :—  
 ' Shall this be, then, an ending to our quest ?  
 And shall we find the worst, who sought the best ?           40  
 Far better had ye sat beside your wives,  
 And 'mid the wine-cups lingered out your lives,

Dreaming of noble deeds, though trying none,  
Than as vain boasters, with your deed undone,  
Come back to Greece, that men may sing of you.  
Are ye all shameless?—are there not a few  
Who have slain fear, knowing the unmoved fates  
Have meted out already what awaits  
The coward and the brave? Ho! Lynceus! stand  
Upon the prow, and let slip from your hand      50  
The wise king's bird; and all ye note, the wind  
Is steady now, and, blowing from behind,  
Drives us on toward the clashers, and I hold  
The helm myself; therefore, lest we be rolled  
Broadside against these horrors, take the oar,  
And hang here, half a furlong from the shore,  
Nor die of fear, until at least we know  
If through these gates the Gods will let us go:  
And if so be they will not, yet will we  
Not empty-handed come to Thessaly,      60  
But strike for Æa through this unknown land,  
Whose arms reach out to us on either hand.'

Then they for shame began to cast off fear,  
And, handling well the oars, kept Argo near  
The changing, little-lighted, spray-washed space  
Whereunto Lynceus set his eager face,  
And loosed the dove, who down the west wind flew;  
Then all the others lost her, dashing through  
The clouds of spray, but Lynceus noted how  
She reached the open space, just as a blow      70  
Had spent itself, and still the hollow sound  
Of the last clash was booming all around;  
And eagerly he noted how the dove  
Stopped 'mazed, and hovered for a while above  
The troubled sea, then stooping, darted through,  
As the blue gleaming rocks together drew;  
Then scarce he breathed, until a joyous shout

He gave, as he held her passing out  
Unscathed, above the surface of the sea,  
While back again the rocks drew sluggishly. 80

Then back their poised oars whirled, and straight they  
drove

Unto the opening of the spray-arched cave ;  
But Jason's eyes alone, of all the crew,  
Beheld the sunny sea and cloudless blue,  
Still narrowing, but bright from rock to rock.

Now as they neared, came the next thundering shock,  
That deafened all, and with an icy cloud  
Hid man from man ; but Jason, shouting loud,  
Still clutched the tiller ; and the oars, grasped tight  
By mighty hands, drove on the ship forthright 90  
Unto the rocks, until, with blinded eyes,  
They blinked one moment at those mysteries  
Unseen before, the next they felt the sun  
Full on their backs, and knew their deed was done.

Then on their oars they lay, and Jason turned,  
And o'er the rocks beheld how Iris burned  
In fair and harmless many-coloured flame,  
And he beheld the way by which they came  
Wide open, changeless, of its spray-clouds cleared ;  
And though in his bewildered ears he heard 100  
The tumult yet, that all was stilled he knew,  
While in and out the unused sea-fowl flew  
Betwixt them, and the now subsiding sea  
Lapped round about their dark feet quietly.

So, turning to the Minyæ, he cried :—  
' See ye, O fellows, the gates opened wide,  
And chained fast by the Gods, nor think to miss  
The very end we seek, or well-earned bliss  
When once again we feel our country's earth,  
And 'twixt the tears of elders, and the mirth 110  
Of young men grown to manhood since we left,

And longing eyes of girls, the fleece, once reft  
 From a king's son of Greece, we hang again  
 In Neptune's temple, nigh the murmuring main.'

Then all men, with their eyes now cleared of brine,  
 Beheld the many-coloured rainbow shine  
 Over the rocks, and saw it fade away,  
 And saw the opening cleared of sea and spray,  
 And saw the green sea lap about the feet  
 Of those blue hills, that never more should meet,      120  
 And saw the wondering sea-fowl fly about  
 Their much-changed tops ; then, with a mighty shout,  
 They rose rejoicing, and poured many a cup  
 Of red wine to the Gods, and hoisting up  
 The weather-beaten sail, with mirth and song,  
 Having good wind at will, they sped along.

Three days passed, and on the fourth they landed at Heraclea, where King Lycus entertained them for many days with feasting and hunting. There Tiphys died from the bite of a snake and his place at the helm was taken by Erginus.

On the eighth day after they had left Heraclea, Lynceus descried Colchis. There, where the Phasis ended its course, stood *Æa*, their wished-for goal—a goodly city, built upon an island and girt about with towered walls. They crossed the river-bar, and as they drew nigh the harbour they saw the wharves alive with a throng of warriors whose arms glistened in the sunlight. (Book VI, 197-312.)

Now drawing quickly nigh the landing-place,  
 Little by little did they slack their pace.  
 Till half a bowshot from the shore they lay,  
 Then Jason shouted : ‘ What do ye to-day      130  
 All armed, O warriors ? and what town is this  
 That here by seeming ye have little bliss  
 Of quiet life, but, smothered up in steel,  
 Ye needs must meet each harmless merchant keel

That nears your haven, though perchance it bring  
Good news, and many a much-desired thing  
That ye may get good cheap ? and such are we,  
But wayfarers upon the troubrous sea,  
Careful of that stored up within our hold,  
Phœnician scarlet, spice, and Indian gold,  
Deep dyeing耳ths, and woad and cinnabar,  
Wrought arms and vessels, and all things that are  
Desired much by dwellers in all lands ;  
Nor doubt us friends, although indeed our hands  
Lack not for weapons, for the unfenced head,  
Where we have been, soon rests among the dead.'

So spake he with a smiling face, nor hid ;  
For he, indeed, was purposed to have tried  
To win the fleece neither by war or stealth :  
But by an open hand and heaps of wealth,  
If so it might be, bear it back again,  
Nor with a handful fight a host in vain.

But being now silent, at the last he saw  
A stir among those folk, who 'gan to draw  
Apart to right and left, leaving a man  
Alone amidst them, unarmed, with a wan  
And withered face, and black beard mixed with grey  
That swept his girdle, who these words did say :—

' O seafarers, I give you now to know  
That on this town oft falleth many a foe,  
Therefore not lightly may folk take the land  
With helm on head, and naked steel in hand ;  
Now, since indeed ye folk are but a few,  
We fear you not, yet fain would that we knew  
Your names and countries, since within this town  
Of Æa may a good man lay him down  
And fear for nought, at least while I am king,  
Æetes, born to heed full many a thing.'

Now Jason, hearing this desired name  
He thought to hear, grown hungrier yet for fame,

With eager heart, and fair face flushed for pride,  
 Said : ‘ King Æetes, if not over wide  
 My name is known, that yet may come to be,  
 For I am Jason of the Minyæ,  
 And through great perils have I come from Greece.  
 And now, since this is Æa, and the fleece  
 Thou slayedst once a guest to get, hangs up  
 Within thine house, take many a golden cup,  
 And arms, and dyestuffs, cloth, and spice, and gold,  
 Yea, all the goods that lie within our hold ;                           180  
 Which are not mean, for neither have we come  
 Leaving all things of price shut up at home,  
 Nor have we seen the faces of great kings  
 And left them giftless ; therefore take these things  
 And be our friend ; or, few folk as we are,  
 The Gods and we may bring thee bitter care.’

Then spake Æetes : ‘ Not for any word,  
 Or for the glitter of thy bloodless sword,  
 O youngling, will I give the fleece to thee,  
 Nor yet for gifts,—for what are such to me ?                           190  
 Behold, if all thy folk joined hand to hand  
 They should not, striving, be enough to stand  
 And girdle round my bursting treasure-house ;  
 Yet, since of this thing thou art amorous,  
 And I love men, and hold the Gods in fear,  
 If thou and thine will land, then mayst thou hear  
 What great things thou must do to win the fleece ;  
 Then, if thou wilt not dare it, go in peace.  
 But come now, thou shalt hear it amidst wine  
 And lovely things, and songs well-nigh divine,  
 And all the feasts that thou hast shared erewhile  
 With other kings, to mine shall be but vile.  
 Lest thou shouldst name me, coming to thy land,  
 A poor guest-fearing man, of niggard hand.’                           200  
 So spake he outwardly, but inly thought,  
 ‘ Within two days this lading shall be brought

To lie amongst my treasures with the best,  
While 'neath the earth these robbers lie at rest.'

But Jason said : ‘ King, if these things be such  
As man may do, I shall not fear them much,  
And at thy board will I feast merrily  
To-night, if on the morrow I must die ;  
And yet, beware of treason, since for nought  
Such lives as ours by none are lightly bought.’

210

The heroes landed and passed along streets of goodly houses to Æetes’ palace, the splendour of which filled them with wonderment. Here they sat down to a sumptuous feast. (Book VI, 401-end.)

## VII. MEDEA

So long they sat, until at last the sun  
Sank in the sea, and noisy day was done.  
Then bade Æetes light the place, that they  
Might turn grim-looking night into the day ;  
Whereon, the scented torches being brought,  
As men with shaded eyes the shadows sought,  
Turning to Jason, spake the king these words :—

‘ Dost thou now wonder, guest, that with sharp swords  
And mailèd breasts of men I fence myself,  
Not as a pedlar guarding his poor pelf,  
But as a God shutting the door of heaven ?  
Behold ! O Prince, for threescore years and seven  
Have I dwelt here in bliss, nor dare I give  
The fleece to thee, lest I should cease to live ;  
Nor dare I quite this treasure to withhold,  
Lest to the Gods I seem grown over-bold ;  
For many a cunning man I have, to tell  
Divine foreshowings of the oracle,  
And thus they warn me. Therefore shalt thou hear

10

What well may fill a hero's heart with fear ;  
But not from my old lips ; that thou mayst have,  
Whether thy life thou here wilt spill or save,  
At least one joy before thou comest to die :—  
Ho ye, bid in my lady presently ! '

But Jason, wondering what should come of this,  
With heart well steeled to suffer woe or bliss,  
Sat waiting, while within the music ceased,  
But from without a strain rose and increased,  
Till shrill and clear it drew anigh the hall,  
But silent at the entry did it fall ;  
And through the place there was no other sound  
But falling of light footsteps on the ground,  
For at the door a band of maids was seen,  
Who went up towards the dais, a lovely queen  
Being in their midst, who, coming nigh the place  
Where the king sat, passed at a gentle pace  
Alone before the others to the board,  
And said : ‘ Aetes, father, and good lord,  
What is it thou wouldest have of me to-night ? ’

40

‘O daughter,’ said Æetes, ‘ tell aright  
Unto this king’s son here, who is my guest,  
What things he must accomplish, ere his quest  
Is finished, who has come this day to seek  
The golden fell brought hither by the Greek,  
The son of Athamas, the unlucky king,  
That he may know at last for what a thing  
He left the meadowy land and peaceful stead.’

Then she to Jason turned her golden head,  
And reaching out her lovely arm, took up  
From off the board a rich fair-jewelled cup,      50  
And said : ‘ O prince, these hard things must ye do :—  
First, going to their stall, bring out the two  
Great brazen bulls, the king my father feeds  
On grass of Pontus and strange-nurtured seeds ;  
Nor heed what they may do, but take the plough

That in their stall stands ever bright enow,  
 And on their gleaming necks cast thou the yoke,  
 And drive them as thou mayst, with cry and stroke,  
 Through the grey acre of the God of War.

‘ Then, when turned up the long straight furrows are, 60  
 Take thou the sack that holds the serpents’ teeth  
 Our fathers slew upon the sunless heath ;  
 There sow those evil seeds, and bide thou there  
 Till they send forth a strange crop, nothing fair,  
 Which garner thou, if thou canst ’scape from death.

‘ But if thereafter still thou drawest breath,  
 Then shalt thou have the seven keys of the shrine  
 Wherein the beast’s fair golden locks yet shine ;  
 But yet sing not the song of triumph then,  
 Or think thyself the luckiest of men ; 70  
 For just within the brazen temple-gates  
 The guardian of the fleece for ever waits,—  
 A fork-tongued dragon, charmed for evermore  
 To writhe and wallow on the precious floor,  
 Sleepless, upon whose skin no steel will bite.

‘ If then with such an one thou needs must fight,  
 Or knowest arts to tame him, do thy worst,  
 Nor, carrying off the prize, shalt thou be curst  
 By us or any God. But yet, think well  
 If these three things be not impossible 80  
 To any man ; and make a bloodless end  
 Of this thy quest, and as my father’s friend  
 Well gifted, in few days return in peace,  
 Lacking for nought, forgetful of the fleece.’

Therewith she made an end ; but while she spoke  
 Came Love unseen, and cast his golden yoke  
 About them both, and sweeter her voice grew,  
 And softer ever, as betwixt them flew,  
 With fluttering wings, the new-born, strong desire ;  
 And when her eyes met his grey eyes, on fire 90

With that that burned her, then with sweet new shame  
Her fair face reddened, and there went and came  
Delicious tremors through her. But he said :—

‘ A bitter song thou singest, royal maid,  
Unto a sweet tune ; yet doubt not that I  
To-morrow this so certain death will try ;  
And dying, may perchance not pass unwept,  
And with sweet memories may my name be kept,  
That men call Jason of the Minyæ.’

Then said she, trembling : ‘ Take, then, this of me, 100  
And drink in token that thy life is passed,  
And that thy reckless hand the die has cast.’

Therewith she reached the cup to him, but he  
Stretched out his hand, and took it joyfully,  
As with the cup he touched her dainty hand,  
Nor was she loth awhile with him to stand,  
Forgetting all else in that honied pain.

At last she turned, and with head raised again  
He drank, and swore for nought to leave that quest  
Till he had reached the worst end or the best ; 110  
And down the hall the clustering Minyæ  
Shouted for joy his godlike face to see.  
But she, departing, made no further sign  
Of her desires, but, while with song and wine  
They feasted till the fevered night was late,  
Within her bower she sat, made blind by fate.

But, when all hushed and still the palace grew,  
She put her gold robes off, and on her drew  
A dusky gown, and with a wallet small  
And cutting wood-knife girt herself withal, 120  
And from her dainty chamber softly passed  
Through stairs and corridors, until at last  
She came down to a gilded watergate,  
Which with a golden key she opened straight,  
And swiftly stept into a little boat,

And, pushing off from shore, began to float  
Adown the stream, and with her tender hands  
And half-bared arms, the wonder of all lands,  
Rowed strongly through the starlit gusty night  
As though she knew the watery way aright.

130

So, from the city being gone apace,  
Turning the boat's head, did she near a space  
Where, by the water's edge, a thick yew wood  
Made a black blot on the dim gleaming flood :  
But when she reached it, dropping either oar  
Upon the grassy bank, she leapt ashore  
And to a yew-bough made the boat's head fast.  
Then here and there quick glances did she cast  
And listened, lest some wanderer should be nigh.  
Then by the river's side she tremblingly  
Undid the bands that bound her yellow hair  
And let it float about her, and made bare  
Her shoulder and right arm, and, kneeling down,  
Drew off her shoes, and girded up her gown,  
And in the river washed her silver feet  
And trembling hands, and then turned round to meet  
The yew-wood's darkness, gross and palpable,  
As though she made for some place known full well.

140

Beneath her feet the way was rough enow,  
And often would she meet some trunk or bough,  
And draw back shrinking, then press on again  
With eager steps, not heeding fear or pain ;  
At last an open space she came unto,  
Where the faint glimmering starlight, shining through,  
Showed in the midst a circle of smooth grass,  
Through which, from dark to dark, a stream did pass,  
And all around was darkness like a wall.

150

So, kneeling there, she let the wallet fall,  
And from it drew a bundle of strange wood  
Wound all about with strings as red as blood ;

160

Then breaking these, into a little pyre  
The twigs she built, and swiftly kindling fire,  
Set it alight, and with her head bent low  
Sat patiently, and watched the red flames grow  
Till it burned bright and lit the dreary place ;  
Then, leaving it, she went a little space  
Into the shadow of the circling trees  
With wood-knife drawn, and whiles upon her knees  
She dropt, and sweeping the sharp knife around,  
Took up some scarce-seen thing from off the ground      170  
And thrust it in her bosom, and at last  
Into the darkness of the trees she passed.

Meanwhile, the new fire burned with clear red flame,  
Not wasting aught ; but when again she came  
Into its light, within her caught-up gown  
Much herbs she had, and on her head a crown  
Of dank night-flowering grasses, known to few.

But, casting down the mystic herbs, she drew  
From out her wallet a bowl polished bright,  
Brazen, and wrought with figures black and white,  
Which from the stream she filled with water thin,      180  
And, kneeling by the fire, cast therein  
Shreddings of many herbs, and setting it  
Amidst the flames, she watched them curl and flit  
About the edges of the blackening brass.  
But when strange fumes began therefrom to pass,  
And clouds of thick white smoke about her flew,  
And colourless and sullen the fire grew,  
Unto her fragrant breast her hand she set,  
And drew therefrom a bag of silken fret,      190  
And into her right palm she gently shook  
Three grains of something small that had the look  
Of millet seeds, then laid the bag once more  
On that sweet hidden place it kissed before,  
And, lifting up her right hand, murmured low :—

' O Three-formed, Venerable, dost thou know  
That I have left to-night my golden bed  
On the sharp pavement of thy wood to shed  
Blood from my naked feet, and from mine eyes  
Intolerable tears ; to pour forth sighs      200  
In the thick darkness, as with footsteps weak  
And trembling knees I prowl about to seek  
That which I need forsooth, but fear to find ?  
What wouldest thou, my Lady ? art thou blind,  
Or sleepest thou, or dost thou, dread one, see  
About me somewhat that misliketh thee ?  
What crown but thine is on mine unbound hair,  
What jewel on my arms, or have I care  
Against the flinty windings of thy wood  
To guard my feet ? or have I thought it good  
To come before thee with unwashen hands ?      210

‘ And this my raiment : Goddess, from three lands  
The fleeces it was woven with were brought  
Where deeds of thine in ancient days were wrought,  
Delos, and Argos, and the Carian mead ;  
Nor was it made, O Goddess, with small heed ;  
By unshod maidens was the yarn well spun,  
And at the moonrise the close web begun,  
And finished at the dawning of the light.

‘ Nought hides me from the unseen eyes of night      220  
But this alone ; what dost thou then to me,  
That at my need my flame sinks wretchedly,  
And all is vain I do ? Ah, is it so  
That to some other helper I must go  
Better at need ; wilt thou then take my part  
Once more, and pity my divided heart ?  
For never was I vowed to thee alone,  
Nor didst thou bid me take the tight-drawn zone,  
And follow through the twilight of the trees  
The glancing limbs of trim-shod huntresses.  
Therefore, look down upon me, and see now      230

These grains of what thou knowest, I will throw  
 Upon the flame, and then, if at my need  
 Thou still wilt help me, help ; but if indeed  
 I am forsaken of thee utterly,  
 The naked knees of Venus will I try ;  
 And I may hap ere long to please her well,  
 And one more story they may have to tell  
 Who in the flowery isle her praises sing.'

So speaking, on the dulled fire did she fling                            240  
 The unknown grains ; but when the Three-formed heard  
 From out her trembling lips that impious word,  
 She granted all her asking, though she knew  
 What evil road Medea hurried to  
 She fain had barred against her on that night.  
 So, now again the fire flamed up bright,  
 The smoke grew thin, and in the brazen bowl,  
 Boiling, the mingled herbs did twine and roll,  
 And with new light Medea's wearied eyes  
 Gleamed in the fireshine o'er those mysteries ;                        250  
 And, taking a green twig from off the ground,  
 Therewith she stirred the mess, that cast around  
 A shower of hissing sparks and vapour white,  
 Sharp to the taste, and 'wildering to the sight ;  
 Which when she saw, the vessel off she drew,  
 As though the ending of her toil she knew,  
 And cooling for awhile she let it stand,  
 But at the last therein she laid her hand,  
 And when she drew it out she thrust the same  
 Amidst the fire, but neither coal or flame                                260  
 The tender rosy flesh could harm a whit,  
 Nor was there mark or blemish left on it.

Then did she pour whatso the bowl did hold  
 Into a fair gemmed phial wrought of gold  
 She drew out from the wallet, and straightway  
 Stopping the mouth, in its own place did lay

The well-wrought phial, girding to her side  
 The wallet that the precious thing did hide ;  
 Then all the remnants of the herbs she cast  
 On to the fire, and straight therefrom there passed      270  
 A high white flame, and when that sunk, outright  
 The fire died into the voiceless night.

But toward the river did she turn again,  
 Not heeding the rough ways or any pain,  
 But running swiftly came unto her boat,  
 And in the mid-stream soon was she afloat,  
 Drawn onward toward the town by flood of tide.

Nor heeded she that by the river side  
 Still lay her golden shoes, a goodly prize  
 To some rough fisher in whose sleepy eyes      280  
 They first should shine, the while he drew his net  
 Against the yew wood of the Goddess set.

But she, swept onward by the hurrying stream,  
 Down in the east beheld a doubtful gleam  
 That told of dawn ; so bent unto the oar  
 In terror lest her folk should wake before  
 Her will was wrought ; nor failed she now to hear  
 From neighbouring homesteads shrilly notes and clear  
 Of waking cocks, and twittering from the sedge  
 Of restless birds about the river's edge ;      290  
 And when she drew between the city walls,  
 She heard the hollow sound of rare footfalls  
 From men who needs must wake for that or this  
 While upon sleepers gathered dreams of bliss,  
 Or great distress at ending of the night,  
 And grey things coloured with the gathering light.

At last she reached the gilded water-gate,  
 And though nigh breathless, scarce she dared to wait  
 To fasten up her shallop to the stone,  
 Which yet she dared not leave ; so this being done,      300

Swiftly by passages and stairs she ran,  
Trembling and pale, though not yet seen by man,  
Until to Jason's chamber door she came.

And there awhile indeed she stayed, for shame  
Rose up against her fear ; but mighty love  
And the sea-haunting rose-crowned seed of Jove  
O'er mastered both ; so trembling, on the pin  
She laid her hand, but ere she entered in  
She covered up again her shoulder sweet,  
And dropped her dusky raiment o'er her feet :      311  
Then entering the dimly-lighted room,  
Where with the lamp dawn struggled, through the gloom  
Seeking the prince she peered, who sleeping lay  
Upon his gold bed, and abode the day  
Smiling, still clad in arms, and round his sword  
His fingers met ; then she, with a soft word,  
Came nigh him, and from out his slackened hand  
With slender rosy fingers drew the brand,  
Then kneeling, laid her hand upon his breast,  
And said : ' O Jason, wake up from thy rest,  
Perchance from thy last rest, and speak to me.'      320

Then fell his light sleep from him suddenly,  
And on one arm he rose, and clenched his hand,  
Raising it up, as though it held the brand,  
And on this side and that began to stare.

But bringing close to him her visage fair,  
She whispered : ' Smite not, for thou hast no sword ;  
Speak not above thy breath, for one loud word  
May slay both thee and me. Day grows apace ;  
What day thou knowest ! Canst thou see my face ?      330  
Last night thou didst behold it with such eyes,  
That I, Medea, wise among the wise,  
The safeguard of my father and his land,  
Who have been used with steady eyes to stand  
In awful groves alone with Hecate,

Henceforth must call myself the bond of thee,  
 The fool of love ; speak not, but kiss me then,  
 Yea, kiss my lips, that not the best of men  
 Has touched ere thou. Alas, quick comes the day !  
 Draw back, but hearken what I have to say,  
 For every moment do I dread to hear  
 Thy wakened folk, or our folk drawing near ;  
 Therefore I speak as if with my last breath,  
 Shameless, beneath the shadowing wings of death,  
 That still may let us twain again to meet,  
 And snatch from bitter love the bitter sweet  
 That some folk gather while they wait to die.

‘ Alas, I loiter, and the day is nigh !  
 Soothly I came to bring thee more than this,  
 The memory of an unasked fruitless kiss  
 Upon thy death-day, which this day would be  
 If there were not some little help in me.’

Therewith from out her wallet did she draw  
 The phial, and a crystal without flaw,  
 Shaped like an apple, scored with words about,  
 Then said : ‘ But now I bid thee have no doubt.  
 With this oil hidden by these gems and gold  
 Anoint thine arms and body, and be bold,  
 Nor fear the fire-breathing bulls one whit,  
 Such mighty virtue have I drawn to it,  
 Whereof I give thee proof.’ Therewith her hand  
 She thrust into the lamp-flame that did stand  
 Anigh the bed, and showed it him again  
 Unscarred by any wound or drawn with pain,  
 Then said : ‘ Now, when Mars’ plain is ploughed at last  
 And in the furrows those ill seeds are cast,  
 Take thou this ball in hand and watch the thing ;  
 Then shalt thou see a horrid crop upspring  
 Of all-armed men therefrom to be thy bane,  
 Were I not here to make their fury vain.  
 Draw not thy sword against them as they rise,

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But cast this ball amid them, and their eyes  
 Shall serve them then but little to see thee,  
 And each of others' weapons slain shall be.

' Now will my father hide his rage at heart,  
 And praise thee much that thou hast played thy part,  
 And bid thee to a banquet on this night,  
 And pray thee wait until to-morrow's light  
 Before thou triest the Temple of the Fleece.  
 Trust not to him, but see that unto Greece  
 The ship's prow turns, and all is ready there.  
 And at the banquet let thy men forbear  
 The maddening wine, and bid them arm them all  
 For what upon this night may chance to fall.

' But I will get by stealth the keys that hold  
 The seven locks which guard the Fleece of Gold ;  
 And while we try the fleece, let thy men steal,  
 How so they may, unto thy ready keel ;  
 Thus art thou saved alive with thy desire.

' But what thing will be left to me but fire ?  
 The fire of fierce despair within my heart,  
 The while I reap my guerdon for my part,  
 Curses and torments, and in no long space  
 Real fire of pine-wood in some rocky place,  
 Wreathing around my body greedily,  
 A dreadful beacon o'er the leaden sea.'

But Jason drew her to him, and he said :—  
 ' Nay, by these tender hands and golden head,  
 That saving things for me have wrought to-night  
 I know not what ; by this unseen delight  
 Of thy fair body, may I rather burn,  
 Nor may the flame die ever if I turn  
 Back to my hollow ship, and leave thee here,  
 Who in one minute art become so dear,  
 Thy limbs so longed for, that at last I know  
 Why men have been content to suffer woe

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390

400

Past telling, if the Gods but granted this,  
 A little while such lips as thine to kiss,  
 A little while to drink such deep delight.

‘ What wouldest thou ? Wilt thou go from me ? The light  
 Is grey and tender yet, and in your land                          411  
 Surely the twilight, lingering long, doth stand  
 ‘Twixt dawn and day.’

‘ O Prince,’ she said, ‘ I came  
 To save your life. I cast off fear and shame  
 A little while, but fear and shame are here.  
 The hand thou holdest trembles with my fear,  
 With shame my cheeks are burning, and the sound  
 Of mine own voice : but ere this hour comes round,  
 We twain will be betwixt the dashing oars,  
 The ship still making for the Grecian shores.                          420  
 Farewell, till then, though in the lists to-day  
 Thyself shalt see me, watching out the play.’

Therewith she drew off from him, and was gone,  
 And in the chamber Jason left alone,  
 Praising the heavenly one, the Queen of Jove,  
 Pondered upon this unasked gift of love,  
 And all the changing wonder of his life.

But soon he rose to fit him for the strife,  
 And ere the sun his orb began to lift                          .  
 O'er the dark hills, with fair Medea's gift                          430  
 His arms and body he anointed well,  
 And round about his neck he hung the spell  
 Against the earth-born, the fair crystal ball  
 Laid in a purse, and then from wall to wall,  
 Athwart the chamber paced full eagerly,  
 Expecting when the fateful time should be.

Meanwhile, Medea coming to her room  
 Unseen, lit up the slowly parting gloom  
 With scented torches : then bound up her hair,  
 And stripped the dark gown from her body fair,                          440

And laid it with the brass bowl in a c'hest,  
Where many a day it had been wont to rest,  
Brazen and bound with iron, and whose key  
No eye but hers had ever happed to see.

Then wearied, on her bed she cast her down,  
And strove to think ; but soon the uneasy frown  
Faded from off her brow, her lips closed tight  
But now, just parted, and her fingers white  
Slackened their hold upon the coverlet,  
And o'er her face faint smiles began to flit,  
As o'er the summer pool the faint soft air :  
So instant and so kind the God was there. 450

### VIII. THE TASKS

Now when she woke again the bright sun glared  
In at the window, and the trumpets blared,  
Shattering the sluggish air of that hot day,  
For fain the king would be upon his way.  
Then straight she called her maidens, who forthright  
Did due observance to her body white,  
And clad her in the raiment of a queen,  
And round her crown they set a wreath of green.

But she descending, came into the hall,  
And found her father clad in royal pall,  
Holding the ivory rod of sovereignty,  
And Jason and his folk were standing by. 10

Now was Æetes saying : ‘ Minyæ,  
And you, my people, who are here by me,  
Take heed, that by his wilful act to-day  
This man will perish, neither will I slay  
One man among you. Nay, Prince, if you will,  
A safe return I give unto you still.’

But Jason answered, smiling in his joy :—

' Once more, *Aeetes*, nay. Against this toy  
 My life is pledged, let all go to the end.' 20  
 Then, lifting up his eyes, he saw his friend  
 Made fresh and lovelier by her quiet rest,  
 And set his hand upon his mailèd breast,  
 Where in its covering lay the crystal ball.

But the king said : ' Then let what will fall, fall !  
 Since time it is that we were on the way ;  
 And thou, O daughter, shalt be there to-day,  
 And see thy father's glory once more shown  
 Before our folk and those the wind has blown 30  
 From many lands to see this play played out.'

Then raised the Colchians a mighty shout.  
 And doubtful grew the Minyæ of the end,  
 Unwitting who on that day was their friend.  
 But down the hall the king passed, who did hold  
 Medea's hand, and on a car of gold  
 They mounted, drawn anigh the carven door,  
 And spearmen of the Colchians went before  
 And followed after ; and the Minyæ  
 Set close together followed solemnly, 40  
 Headed by Jason, at the heels of these.

So passed they through the streets and palaces  
 Thronged with much folk, and o'er the bridges passed,  
 And to the open country came at last,  
 Nor there went far, but turning to the right,  
 Into a close they came, where there were dight  
 Long galleries about the fateful stead,  
 Built all of marble fair and roofed with lead,  
 And carved about with stories of old time,  
 Framed all about with golden lines of rhyme. 50  
 Moreover, midmost was an image made  
 Of mighty Mars who maketh kings afraid,  
 That looked down on an altar builded fair,  
 Wherfrom already did a bright fire glare  
 And made the hot air glassy with its heat.

So in the gallery did the king take seat  
With fair Medea, and the Colchians stood  
Hedging the twain in with a mighty wood  
Of spears and axes, while the Minyæ  
Stood off a space the fated things to see.

60

Ugly and rugged was that spot of ground,  
And with an iron wall was closed around,  
And at the further end a monstrous cage  
Of iron bars, shut in the stupid rage  
Of those two beasts, and therefrom ever came  
The flashing and the scent of sulphurous flame,  
As with their brazen, clangorous bellowing  
They hailed the coming of the Colchian king ;  
Nor was there one of the seafaring men  
But trembled, gazing on the deadly pen,  
But Jason only, who before the rest  
Shone like a star, having upon his breast  
A golden corslet from the treasury  
Of wise King Phineus by the doubtful sea,  
By an Egyptian wrought who would not stay  
At Salmydessa more than for a day,  
But on that day the wondrous breast-plate wrought,  
Which, with good will and strong help, Jason bought ;  
And from that treasury his golden shoe  
Came, and his thighs the king's gift covered too ;  
But on his head his father's helm was set  
Wreathed round with bay leaves, and his sword lay yet  
Within the scabbard, while his ungloved hand  
Bore nought within it but an olive wand.

70

Now King Aëtes well beholding him,  
Fearless of mien and so unmatched of limb,  
Trembled a little in his heart as now  
He bade the horn-blowers the challenge blow,  
But thought, ' what strength can help him, or what art,  
Or which of all the Gods be on his part ? '  
Impious, who knew not through what doubtful days,

80

90

E'en from his birth, and perilous rough ways  
 Juno had brought him safely, nor indeed  
 Of his own daughter's quivering lips took heed,  
 And restless hands wherein the God so wrought,  
 The wise man seeing her had known her thought.

Now Jason, when he heard the challenge blow,  
 Across the evil fallow 'gan to go  
 With face beyond its wont in nowise pale,  
 Nor footstep faltering, if that might avail  
 The doomed man aught : so to the cage he came,  
 Whose bars now glowed red-hot with spouted flame  
 In many a place ; nor doubted any one  
 Who there beheld him that his days were done,  
 Except his love alone, and even she,  
 Sickening with doubt and terror, scarce could see  
 The hero draw the brazen bolt aside  
 And throw the glowing wicket open wide.

100

But he alone, apart from his desire,  
 Stood unarmed, facing those two founts of fire,  
 Yet feared not aught, for hope and fear were dead  
 Within his heart, and utter hardihead  
 Had Juno set there ; but the awful beasts  
 Beholding now the best of all their feasts,  
 Roared in their joy and fury, till from sight  
 They and the prince were hidden by the white  
 Thick rolling clouds of sulphurous pungent smoke,  
 Through which upon the blinded man they broke.

110

But when within a yard of him they came,  
 Baffled they stopped, still bellowing, and the flame  
 Still spouting out from nostril and from mouth,  
 As from some island mountain in the south  
 The trembling mariners behold it cast ;  
 But still to right and left of him it passed,  
 Breaking upon him as cool water might,  
 Nor harming more, except that from his sight

120

All corners of the cage were hidden now,  
Nor knew he where to seek the brazen plough.  
As to and fro about the quivering cage  
The monsters rushed in blind and helpless rage.

130

But as he doubted, to his eyes alone  
Within the place a golden light outshone,  
Scattering the clouds of smoke, and he beheld  
Once more the Goddess who his head upheld  
In rough Anaurus on that other tide ;  
She, smiling on him, beckoned, and 'gan glide  
With rosy feet across the fearful floor,  
Breathing cool odours round her, till a door  
She opened to him in the iron wall,  
Through which he passed, and found a grisly stall  
Of iron still, and at one end of it,      140  
By glimmering lamps with greenish flame half lit,  
Beheld the yoke and shining plough he sought ;  
Which, seizing straight, by mighty strength he brought  
Unto the door, nor found the Goddess there,  
Who in the likeness of a damsel fair,  
Colchian Metharma, through the spearmen passed,  
Bearing them wine, and causeless terror cast  
Into their foolish hearts, nor spared to go  
And 'mid the close seafaring ranks to sow      150  
Good hope of joyful ending, and then stood  
Behind the maid unseen, and brought the blood  
Back to her cheeks and trembling lips and wan,  
With thoughts of things unknown to maid or man.

Meanwhile upon the foreheads of the twain  
Had Jason cast the yoke with little pain,  
And drove them now with shouts out through the door  
Which in such guise ne'er had they passed before,  
For never were they made the earth to till,  
But rather, feeding fat, to work the will      160  
Of some all-knowing man ; but now they went  
Like any peasant's beasts, tamed by the scent

Of those new herbs Medea's hand had plucked,  
Whose roots from evil earth strange power had sucked.

Now in the open field did Jason stand  
And to the plough-stilts set his unused hand,  
And down<sup>y</sup> betwixt them lustily he bent ;  
Then the bulls drew, and the bright ploughshare sent  
The loathly fallow up on the right side,  
Whilst o'er their bellowing shrilly Jason cried :—

170

‘ Draw nigh, O King, and thy new ploughman see,  
Then mayst thou make me shepherd, too, to thee ;  
Nor doubt thou, doing so, from out thy flock  
To lose but one, who ne'er shall bring thee stock,  
Or ram or ewe ; nor doubt the grey wolf, King,  
Wood-haunting bear, dragon, or such like thing.  
Ah the straight furrow ! how it mindeth me  
Of the smooth parting of the land-locked sea  
Over against Eubcea, and this fire  
Of the fair altar where my joyful sire

180

Will pour out wine to Neptune when I come  
Not empty-handed back unto my home.’

Such mocks he said ; but when the sunlight broke  
Upon his armour through the sulphurous smoke,  
And showed the lengthening furrow cutting through  
The ugly fallow as anigh they drew,  
The joyful Minyæ gave a mighty shout ;  
But pale the king sat with brows knit for doubt,  
Muttering : ‘ Whose counsel hast thou taken, then,  
To do this thing, which not the best of men

190

Could do unholpen of some sorcery ?  
Whoso it is, wise were he now to die  
Ere yet I know him, since for many a day  
Vainly for death I hope to hear him pray.’

Meanwhile, askance Medea eyed the king,  
Thinking nought safe until that everything  
Was finished in the Colchian land, and she

No more beheld its shores across the sea ;  
 But he, beholding her pale visage, thought  
 Grief like to his such paleness on her brought,                           200  
 And turning to her, said : ‘ How pale thou art !  
 Let not this first foil go unto thine heart  
 Too deeply, since thou knowest certainly,  
 One way or other this vain fool must die.’  
 ‘ Father,’ she said, ‘ a doubt is on me still,  
 Some God this is come here our wealth to spill ;  
 Nor is this first thing easier than the rest.’  
 Then stammering, she said : ‘ Were it not best  
 To give him that which he must have at last,  
 Before he slays us ? ’ But Æetes cast                                   210  
 A sharp glance at her, and a pang shot through  
 His weary heart as half the truth he knew.  
 But for one moment, and he made reply  
 In passionate words : ‘ Then, daughter, let me die !  
 And, ere I die, behold thee led along  
 A wretched slave to suffer grief and wrong  
 In far-off lands, and Æa at thy back  
 Nought but a huge flame hiding woe and wrack,  
 Before from out my willing open hand  
 This wonder, and the safeguard of my land                           220  
 A God shall take ; and such this man is not.  
 What ! dost thou think because his eyes are hot  
 On tender maidens he must be a God ?  
 Or that because firmly this field he trod  
 Well-fenced with magic ? Were he like to me,  
 Grey-haired and lean, what Godhead wouldest thou see  
 In such an one ? Hold, then, thy peace of this,  
 And thou shalt see thy God full widely miss  
 The mark he aims at, when from out the earth  
 Spring up those brothers of an evil birth.’                           230

And therewithal he gazed at her, and thought  
 To see the rosy flush by such words brought  
 Across her face ; as in the autumn eve,

Just as the sun's last half begins to leave  
 The shivering world, both east and west are red.—  
 But calm and pale she turned about her head,  
 And said : ‘ My father, neither were these words  
 My words, nor would I struggle with my lords ;  
 Thou art full wise ; whatso thine heart would have  
 That do, and heed me not, who fain would save      240  
 This glory of thy kingdom and of thee.  
 But now look up, and soothly thou shalt see  
 Mars' acre tilled : the field is ready then,  
 Bid them bring forth the seed that beareth men.’

Again with her last words the shouts out-broke  
 From the seafarers, for, beside the yoke,  
 Before Mars' altar did Prince Jason stand,  
 Holding the wand of olive in his hand,  
 And on the new-turned furrow shone the sun  
 Behind him, and his half-day's work was done.      250

And now another marvel : for, behold,  
 As at the furrow's end he slacked his hold  
 Upon the plough-stilts, all the bellowing  
 Wherewith the beasts had made the grim close ring,  
 Fell suddenly, and all the fire died  
 That they were wont erewhile to scatter wide  
 From mouth and nostril, and their loins and knees  
 Stiffened, and they grew nought but images . . .  
 Lifelike but lifeless, wonderful but dead,  
 Such as he makes, who many a day hath fed      200  
 His furnace with the beechwood, when the clay  
 Has grown beneath his deft hands day by day  
 And all is ready for the casting, then  
 Such things as these he makes for royal men.

But 'mid the shouts turned Jason to the king,  
 And said : ‘ Fair sir, behold a wondrous thing !  
 And since these beasts have been content to stay  
 Before Mars' altar, from this very day

His should they be if they were mine to give.'

'O Jason,' said the king, 'well mayst thou live  
For many a day, since thou this deed hast done.  
But for the Gods, not unto any one  
Will I give gifts ; but let them take from me  
What once they gave, if so the thing must be.  
But do thou take this sack from out my hand  
And cast its seed about the new-tilled land,  
And watch the issue ; and keep words till then,  
I counsel thee, O luckiest of men.'

270

Then Jason took the sack, and with it went  
About that field new turned, and broadcast sent  
The white teeth scattering, but or ere he came  
Back to the altar, and the flickering flame,  
He heard from 'neath the earth a muttered sound  
That grew and grew, till all that piece of ground  
Swelled into little hillocks, like as where  
A stricken field was foughten, but that there  
Quiet the heroes' bones lie underneath  
The quivering grasses and the dusky heath ;  
But now these heaps the labouring earth upthrew  
About Mars' acre, ever greater grew,  
And still increased the noise, till none could hear  
His fellow speak, and paleness and great fear  
Fell upon all : and Jason only stood  
As stands the stout oak in the poplar wood  
When winds are blowing.

280

. Then he saw the mounds  
Bursten asunder, and the muttered sounds  
Changed into loud strange shcuts and warlike clang,  
As with freed feet at last the earth-born sprang  
On to the tumbling earth, and the sunlight  
Shone on bright arms clean ready for the fight.

290

But terribly they showed, for through the place  
Not one there was but had his staring face,

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With great wide eyes, and lips in a set smile,  
Turned full on Jason, who, for a short while,  
Forgot indeed Medea's warning word,  
And from its golden sheath half drew his sword,  
But then, remembering all, cried valiantly :  
' New born ye are—new slain too shall ye be.  
Take this, and round about it read your doom,  
And bid them make new dwellings in the tomb,  
Wherfrom ye came, nor ever should have passed.'

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Therewith the ball among the host he cast,  
Standing to watch what next that folk would do.  
But he the ball had smitten turned unto  
The one who stood by him and like a cup  
Shattered his head ; then the next lifted up  
His axe and slew the slayer, and straightway  
Among the rest began a deadly fray.

No man gave back a foot, no breathing space  
One took or gave within that dreadful place,  
But where the vanquished stood there was he slain,  
And straight the conquering arm was raised again  
To meet its match and in its turn to fall ;  
No tide was there of fainting and recall,  
No quivering pennon o'er their heads to flit,  
Nor name or eager shout called over it,  
No groan of pain, and no despairing cry  
From him who knows his time has come to die,  
But passionless each bore him in that fight,  
Scarce otherwise than as a smith might smite  
On sounding iron or bright glittering brass.

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So, little by little, did the clamour pass  
As one by one each fell down in his place,  
Until at last, midmost the bloody space,  
One man was left, alive but wounded sore,  
Who, staring round about and seeing no more  
His brothers' spears against him, fixed his eyes  
Upon the queller of those mysteries.

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Then dreadfully they gleamed, and with no word,  
He tottered towards him with uplifted sword. 340

But scarce he made three paces down the field,  
Ere chill death reached his heart, and on his shield  
Clattering he fell. So satiate of fight  
Quickly the earth-born were, and their delight  
With what it fed on perished, and one hour  
Ripened the deadly fruit of that fell flower.

Then, Jason, mocking, cried unto the king :—  
' O wonderful, indeed, must be the thing  
Thou guardest with such wondrous guards as these ;  
Make no delay, therefore, but bring the keys  
That I may see this dear delight of all.' 350

But on Æetes' face a change did fall,  
As though a mask had been set over it,  
And smiles of little meaning 'gan to flit  
O'er his thin lips, as he spake out at last :—  
' No haste, dear guest, for surely now is passed  
All enmity from 'twixt us, since I know  
How like a God thou art ; and thou shalt go  
To-morrow to thy ship, to make for Greece ;  
And with no trial more, bear back the fleece 360  
Along our streets, and like no conquered thing,  
But with much scattered flowers and tabouring,  
Bearing with it great gifts and all my love ;  
And in return, I pray thee, pray to Jove,  
That I may have a few more years of life,  
And end at last in honour, free from strife.  
And now to-night be merry, and let time  
Be clean forgotten, and bring Saturn's clime  
And golden days upon our flower-crowned brows,  
For of the unseen future what man knows ? '

' O King,' said Jason, ' for these words I praise  
Thy wisdom much, and wish thee happy days.  
And I will give thee honour as I can,  
Naming thee ever as a noble man 370

Through all the lands I come to : and will take  
 Thy gifts, indeed, and thou, for Jason's sake,  
 Shalt have gifts too, whatso thy soul may wish,  
 From out our keel that has escaped the fish.'

So spake those wary foes, fair friends in look,  
 And so in words great gifts they gave and took,  
 And had small profit, and small loss thereby.  
 Nor less Medea feigned, but angrily  
 Regarded Jason, and across her brow  
 Drew close her veil, nor doubted the king now  
 Her faith and loyalty.

So from the place  
 Back toward the town they turned at a soft pace,  
 In guise of folk that hold high festival,  
 Since straightly had Æetes bid that all  
 Should do the strangers pleasure on that day.

But warily went Jason on the way,  
 And through his folk spread words, to take good heed  
 Of what might come, and ready be at need,

Nor yet to take Æetes for their friend,  
 Since even then he plotted how to end  
 Their quest and lives : therefore he bade them spare  
 The wine that night, nor look on damsels fair ;  
 But that, the feast done, all should stealthily  
 Get to the quay, and round about to sea  
 Turn Argo's head, and wait like hounds in slip,  
 Holding the oars, within the hollow ship.

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'Nor doubt,' said he, 'that good and glorious  
 The end shall be, since all the Gods for us  
 Are fighting certainly : but should death come  
 Upon me in this land, then turn back home,  
 Nor wait till they shall lay your bones with mine,  
 Since now I think to go unto the shrine,  
 The while ye wait, and take therefrom the fleece,  
 Not all unholpen, and depart in peace,  
 While yet the barbarous king beholds us dead

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In dreams alone, or through his waking head  
The vile plots chase each other for our death.' 410

These things he said, but scarce above his breath,  
Unto wise Nestor, who beside him went,  
Who unto Butes straight the message sent.  
And he to Phlias, so the words at last  
Throughout the wondering seafarers had passed,  
And so were all made ready for the night.

But on that eve, with manifold delight,  
Æetes feasted them in his fair hall :  
But they, well knowing what might chance to fall, 420  
Sat saying little, nor drank deep of wine ;  
Until at last the old king gave the sign  
To break the feast up, and within a while  
All seemed asleep throughout the mighty pile.

All seemed asleep, but now Medea went  
With beating heart to work out her intent,  
Scarce doubtful of the end, since only two  
In all the world, she and Æetes, knew  
Where the keys were, far from the light of day,  
Beneath the palace. So, in garments grey, 430  
Like the soft creeping twilight did she go,  
Until she reached a passage far below  
The river, past whose oozing walls of stone  
She and the king alone had ever gone.

Now she, who thus far had come through the dark,  
Stopped, and in haste striking a little spark  
From something in her hand, lit up a lamp,  
Whose light fell on an iron door, with damp  
All rusted red, which with a key of brass  
She opened, and there-through made haste to pass, 440  
Shuddering a little, as her feet 'gan tread  
Upon a dank cold floor, though overhead  
High-arched the place was, fairly built enow.  
But she across the slippery floor did go

Unto the other wal<sup>l</sup>, wherein was built  
A little aumbrye, with a door o'er-gilt,  
That with the story of King Athamas  
And Phryxus and the ram all carven was.  
There did she draw forth from her balmy breast  
A yellow flowering herb, that straight she pressed      450  
Upon the lock, low muttering the while ;  
But soon across her face there passed a smile,  
As backward in the lock the bolts did turn,  
And the door opened ; then a golden urn  
She saw within the aumbrye, whereon she  
Drew out the thing she sought for eagerly,  
The seven keys with sere-cloth done about.  
Then through the dreary door did she pass out,  
And made it fast, and went her way once more  
Through the black darkness on from floor to floor.      460

And so, being come to Jason, him she found  
All armed, and ready ; therefore, with no sound,  
She beckoned him to follow, and the twain  
Passed through the brazen doors, locked all in vain,  
Such virtue had the herb Medea bore,  
And passing, did they leave ajar each door,  
To give more ease unto the Minyæ.

So out into the fresh night silently  
The lovers passed, the loveliest of the land ;  
But as they went, neither did hand touch hand,      470  
Or face seek face ; for, gladsome as they were,  
Trembling with joy to be at last so near  
The wished-for day, some God yet seemed to be  
'Twixt the hard past and their felicity.

## IX. THE TAKING OF THE FLEECE AND DEPARTURE OF THE ARGO

But when they reached the precinct of the God,  
And on the hallowed turf their feet now trod,

Medea turned to Jason, and she said :—

‘ O love, turn round, and note the goodlihead

My father’s palace shows beneath the stars.

Bethink thee of the men grown old in wars,

Who do my bidding ; what delights I have,

How many ladies lie in wait to save

My life from toil and carefulness, and think

How sweet a cup I have been used to drink,

10

And how I cast it to the ground for thee.

Upon the day thou weariest of me,

I wish that thou mayst somewhat think of this,

And ’twixt thy new-found kisses, and the bliss

Of something sweeter than thine old delight,

Remember thee a little of this night

Of marvels, and this starlit, silent place,

And these two lovers, standing face to face.’

‘ O love,’ he said, ‘ by what thing shall I swear,

That while I live thou shalt not be less dear

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Than thou art now ? ’

‘ Nay, sweet,’ she said, ‘ let be ;

Wert thou more fickle than the restless sea,

Still should I love thee, knowing thee for such ;

Whom I know not, indeed, but fear the touch

Of Fortune’s hand when she beholds our bliss,

And knows that nought is good to me but this.

‘ But now be ready, for I long full sore

To hear the merry dashing of the oar,

And feel the freshness of the following breeze

That sets me free, and sniff the rough salt seas.

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Look ! yonder thou mayst see armed shadows steal  
Down to the quays, the guiders of thy keel ;  
Now follow me, though little shalt thou do  
To gain this thing, if Hecate be true  
Unto her servant. Nay, draw not thy sword,  
And, for thy life, speak not a single word  
Until I bid thee, else may all be lost,  
And of this game our lives yet pay the cost.'

Then toward the brazen temple-door she went,  
Wherefrom, half-open, a faint gleam was sent ;      40  
For little need of lock it had forsooth,  
Because its sleepless guardian knew no ruth,  
And had no lust for precious things or gold ;  
Whom, drawing near, Jason could now behold,  
As back Medea thrust the heavy door,  
For prone he lay upon the gleaming floor,  
Not moving, though his restless, glittering eyes  
Left them no hope of wile or of surprise.  
Hideous he was, where all things else were fair ;  
Dull-skinned, foul-spotted, with lank rusty hair      50  
About his neck ; and hooked yellow claws  
Just showed from 'neath his belly and huge jaws,  
Closed in the hideous semblance of a smile.  
Then Jason shuddered, wondering with what guile  
That fair king's daughter such a beast could tame,  
And of his sheathed sword had but little shame.

But being within the doors both mantle grey  
And heavy gown Medea cast away,  
And in thin clinging silk alone was clad,  
And round her neck a golden chain she had,      60  
Whereto was hung a harp of silver white.  
Then the great dragon, at that glittering sight,  
Raised himself up upon his loathly feet,  
As if to meet her, while her fingers sweet  
Already moved amongst the golden strings,  
Preluding nameless and delicious things ;

But now she beckoned Jason to her side,  
 For slowly towards them 'gan the beast to glide,  
 And when close to his love the hero came,  
 She whispered breathlessly : ' On me the blame  
     70  
 If here we perish ; if I give the word,  
 Then know that all is lost, and draw thy sword,  
 And manlike die in battle with the beast ;  
 So dying shalt thou fail to see at least  
 This body thou desiredst so to see,  
 In thy despite here mangled wretchedly.  
 Peace, for he cometh—O thou Goddess bright,  
 What help wilt thou be unto me this night ? '

So murmured she, while ceaselessly she drew  
 Her fingers through the strings, and fuller grew  
 The tinkling music, but the beast drawn nigh  
 Went slower still, and turning presently  
 Began to move around them in a ring.  
 And as he went, there fell a strange rattling  
 Of his dry scales ; but as he turned, she turned,  
 Nor failed to meet the eyes that on her burned  
 With steadfast eyes, and, lastly, clear and strong  
 Her voice broke forth in sweet melodious song :—

' O evil thing, what brought thee here  
 To be a wonder and a fear  
     90  
 Unto the river-haunting folk ?  
 Was it the God of Day that broke  
 The shadow of thy windless trees,  
 Gleaming from golden palaces,  
 And shod with light and armed with light,  
 Made thy slime stone, and day thy night,  
 And drove thee forth unwillingly  
 Within his golden house to lie ?

' Or was it the slim messenger,  
 Who, treading softly, free from fear,  
     100  
 Beguiled thee with his smiling face

From out thy *Lim* abiding place  
To follow him and set thee down  
Midst of this twice-washed royal town ?

‘ Or, was it rather the dread Lord  
Who slayeth without spear or sword,  
And with the flower-culling maid  
Of Enna, dwelleth in the shade,  
Who, with stern voice compelling thee,  
Hath set thee here, our bane to be ?

‘ Or was it Venus, seeking far  
A sleepless guard ’gainst grief and war,  
Who, journeying through thy dismal land,  
Beside the heavy lake did stand,  
And with no word, but very sight  
Of tender limbs and bosom white,  
Drew forth thy scaly feet and hard,  
To follow over rock and shard ?

‘ Or rather, thy dull, waveless lake  
Didst thou not leave for her dread sake,  
Who, passing swift from glade to glade,  
The forest-dwellers makes afraid  
With shimmering of her silver bow  
And dreadful arrows ? Even so  
I bid thee now to yield to me,  
Her maid, who overmastered thee,  
The three-formed dreadful one who reigns  
In heaven and the fiery plains,  
But on the green earth best of all.

‘ Lo, now thine upraised crest let fall,  
Relax thy limbs, let both thine eyes  
Be closed, and bestial fantasies  
Fill thy dull head till dawn of day  
And we are far upon our way.’

As thus she sung the beast seemed not to hear  
Her words at first, but ever drew anear,

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Circling about them, and Medea's face  
 Grew pale unto the lips, though still the place  
 Rung with the piercing sweetness of her song ;  
 But slower soon he dragged his length along                   140  
 And on his limbs he tottered, till at last  
 All feebly by the wondering prince he passed,  
 And whining to Medea's feet he crept,  
 With eyes half closed, as though wellnigh he slept,  
 And there before her laid his head adown ;  
 Who, shuddering, on his wrinkled neck and brown  
 Set her white foot, and whispered : ' Haste, O love !  
 Behold the keys ; haste ! while the Gods above  
 Are friendly to us ; there behold the shrine  
 Where thou canst see the lamp of silver shine.                 150  
 Nay, draw not death upon both thee and me  
 With fearless kisses ; fear, until the sea  
 Shall fold green arms about us lovingly,  
 And kindly Venus to thy keel be nigh.'

Then lightly from her soft side Jason stept,  
 While still upon the beast her foot she kept,  
 Still murmuring gently many an unknown word,  
 As when through half-shut casements the brown bird  
 We hearken when the night is come in June,  
 And thick-leaved woods are 'twixt us and his tune.           160

But Jason, going swiftly with good heart,  
 Came to the wished-for shrine built all apart  
 Midmost the temple, that on pillars stood  
 Of jasper green, and marble red as blood  
 All white itself and carven cunningly  
 With Neptune bringing from the wavy sea  
 The golden shining ram to Athamas ;  
 And the first door thereof of silver was,  
 Wrought over with a golden glittering sun  
 That seemed well-nigh alike the heavenly one.                 170  
 Such art therein the cunningest of men

Had used, which li'le Jason heeded then,  
 But thrusting in the lock the smallest key  
 Of those he bore, it opened easily ;  
 And then five others, neither wrought of gold,  
 Or carved with tales, or lovely to behold,  
 He opened ; but before the last one stayed  
 His hand, wherein the heavy key he weighed,  
 And pondering, in low muttered word, he said :—

‘ The prize is reached, which yet I somewhat dread      180  
 To draw unto me ; since I know indeed

That henceforth war and toil shall be my meed.—  
 Too late to fear, it was too late, the hour  
 I left the grey cliffs and the beechen bower,  
 So here I take hard life and deathless praise,  
 Who once desired nought but quiet days,  
 And painless life, not empty of delight ;  
 I, who shall now be quickener of the fight,  
 Named by a great name—a far-babbled name,  
 The ceaseless seeker after praise and fame.      190

‘ May all be well, and on the noisy ways  
 Still may I find some wealth of happy days.’

Therewith he threw the last door open wide,  
 Whose hammered iron did the marvel hide,  
 And shut his dazzled eyes, and stretched his hands  
 Out toward the sea-born wonder of all lands,  
 And plunged them deep within the locks of gold,  
 Grasping the fleece within his mighty hold.

Which when Medea saw, her gown of grey  
 She caught up from the ground, and drew away      200  
 Her wearied foot from off the rugged beast,  
 And while from her soft strain she never ceased,  
 In the dull folds she hid her silk from sight,  
 And then, as bending 'neath the burden bright,  
 Jason drew nigh, joyful, yet still afraid,  
 She met him, and her wide grey mantle laid

Over the fleece, whispering : ‘ Make no delay ;  
 He sleeps, who never slept by night or day  
 Till now ; nor will his charmed sleep be long.  
 Light-foot am I, and sure thine arms are strong ;      210  
 Haste, then ! No word ! nor turn about to gaze  
 At me, as he who in the shadowy ways  
 Turned round to see once more the twice-lost face.’

Then swiftly did they leave the dreadful place,  
 Turning no look behind, and reached the street,  
 That with familiar look and kind did greet  
 Those wanderers, mazed with marvels and with fear.  
 And so, unchallenged, did they draw anear  
 The long white quays, and at the street’s end now      220  
 Beheld the ships’ masts standing row by row  
 Stark black against the stars : then cautiously  
 Peered Jason forth, ere they took heart to try  
 The open starlit place ; but nought he saw  
 Except the night-wind twitching the loose straw  
 From half-unloaded keels, and nought he heard  
 But the strange twittering of a caged green bird  
 Within an Indian ship, and from the hill  
 A distant baying : yea, all was so still,  
 Somewhat they doubted, natheless forth they passed,  
 And Argo’s painted sides they reached at last.      230

On whom down-looking, scarce more noise they heard  
 Than from the other ships ; some muttered word,  
 Some creaking of the timbers, as the tide  
 Ran gurgling seaward past her shielded side.  
 Then Jason knelt, and whispered : ‘ Wise be ye,  
 O fair companions on the pathless sea.  
 But come, Erginus, Nestor, and ye twain  
 Of Lacedæmon, to behold my gain ;  
 Take me amongst you, neither be afraid  
 To take withal this gold, and this fair maid.      240  
 Yare !—for the ebb runs strongly towards the sea,

The east wind drives the rack to Thessaly,  
And lightly do such kings as this one sleep  
If now and then small watch their servants keep.'

Then saw Medea men like shadows grey  
Rise from the darksome decks, who took straightway  
With murmured joy, from Jason's outstretched hands,  
The conquered fleece, the wonder of all lands,  
While with strong arms he raised the royal maid,  
And in their hold the precious burthen laid,      250  
And scarce her dainty feet could touch the deck,  
Ere down he leapt, and little now did reck  
That loudly clanged his armour therewithal.

But, turning toward, did Medea call :—  
' O noble Jason, and ye heroes strong,  
To sea, to sea ! nor pray ye loiter long ;  
For surely shall ye see the beacons flare  
Ere in mid stream ye are, and running fair  
On toward the sea with tide, and oar, and sail.  
My father wakes, nor bides he to bewail      260  
His loss and me ; I see his turret gleam  
As he goes towards the beacon, and down stream  
Absyrtus lurks before the sandy bar  
In mighty keel well manned and dight for war.'

But as she spoke, rattling the cable slipped  
From out the hawse-hole, and the long oars dipped  
As from the quays the heroes pushed away,  
And in the loosened sail the wind 'gan play ;  
But e'en as they unto the stroke leaned back,  
And Nauplius, catching at the main-sheet slack      270  
Had drawn it taut, out flared the beacon wide,  
Lighting the waves, and they heard folk who cried :  
' Awake, awake, awake, O Colchian folk ! '  
And all about the blare of horns outbroke,  
As watch-tower answered watch-tower down the stream,  
Where far below they saw the bale-fires gleam ;  
And galloping of horses now they heard,

And clang of arms, and cries of men af<sub>a</sub>rd ;  
 For now the merchant mariners who lay  
 About the town, thought surely an ill day  
 Had dawned upon them while they slept at ease,  
 And, half awake, pushed madly from the quays  
 With crash of breaking oars and meeting ships,  
 And cries and curses from outlandish lips ;  
 So fell the quiet night to turmoil sore,  
 While in the towers, over the uproar,  
 Melodiously the bells began to ring.

280

But Argo, leaping forward to the swing  
 Of measured oars, and leaning to the breeze,  
 Sped swiftly 'twixt the dark and whispering trees :  
 Nor longer now the heroes silence kept,  
 So joyously their hearts within them leapt,  
 But loud they shouted, seeing the gold fell  
 Laid heaped before them, and longed sore to tell  
 Their fair adventure to the maids of Greece ;  
 And as the mingled noises did decrease  
 With added distance, and behind them night  
 Grew pale with coming of the eastern light,  
 Across the strings his fingers Orpheus drew,  
 And through the woods his winged music flew :—

290

300

‘ O surely, now the fisherman  
 Draws homeward through the water wan  
 Across the bay we know so well,  
 And in the sheltered chalky dell  
 The shepherd stirs ; and now afield  
 They drive the team with white wand peeled,  
 Muttering across the barley-bread  
 At daily toil and dreary-head.

‘ And midst them all, perchance, my love  
 Is waking, and doth gently move  
 And stretch her soft arms out to me,

310

Forgetting thousand leagues of sea ;  
And now her body I behold,  
Unhidden but by hair of gold,  
And now the silver water kiss,  
The crown of all delight and bliss.  
And now I see her bind her hair  
And do upon her raiment fair,  
And now before the altar stand,  
With incense in her outstretched hand,      320  
To supplicate the Gods for me ;  
Ah, one day landing from the sea,  
Amid the maidens shall I hear  
Her voice in praise, and see her near,  
Holding the gold-wrapt laurel crown,  
'Midst of the shouting, wondering town ! '

So sung he joyously, nor knew that they  
Must wander yet for many an evil day  
Or ever the dread Gods should let them come  
Back to the white walls of their long-left home.      330  
But on the shouting heroes gazed adown  
The foundress of their triumph and renown,  
And to her lover's side still drew anear,  
With heart now swelled with joy, now sick with fear,  
And cheeks now flushed with love, now pale and wan,  
As now she thought upon that goodly man,  
And now on the uncertain, dreadful Gods,  
And now upon her father, and the odds  
He might well raise against the reckless crew,  
For all his mighty power full well she knew ;      340  
No wonder therefore if her heart grew cold,  
And if her wretched self she did behold,  
Led helpless through some old familiar place,  
With none to turn on her a pitying face,  
Unto the death in life she still might win ;  
And yet, if she should 'scape the meed of sin

This once, the world was fair and bright enough,  
 And love there was to lead her o'er the rough  
 Of life, and love to crown her head with flowers,  
 And fill her days and nights with happy hours.

350

Now swift beneath the oar-strokes Argo flew,  
 While the sun rose behind them, and they drew  
 Unto the river's mouth, nor failed to see  
 Absyrtus' galley waiting watchfully  
 Betwixt them and the white-topped turbid bar.  
 Therefore they gat them ready now for war  
 With joyful hearts, for sharp they sniffed the sea,  
 And saw the great waves tumbling green and free  
 Outside the bar upon the way to Greece,  
 The rough green way to glory and sweet peace.

360

Then to the prow gat Jason, and the maid  
 Must needs be with him, though right sore afraid,  
 As, nearing now the Colchian ship, they hung  
 On balanced oars ; but the wild Arcas strung  
 His deadly bow, and clomb into the top.

Then Jason cried : ‘ Absyrtus, will ye stop  
 Our peaceful keel, or let us take the sea ?  
 Soothly, have we no will to fight with thee  
 If we may pass unfoughten, therefore say,  
 What is it thou wilt have this dawn of day ? ’

370

Now on the other prow Absyrtus stood,  
 His visage red with eager wrathful blood,  
 And in his right hand shook a mighty spear,  
 And said : ‘ O seafarers, ye pass not here,  
 For gifts or prayers, but if it must be so,  
 Over our sunken bulwarks shall ye go ;  
 Nor ask me why, for thus my father wills.  
 Yet, as I now behold you, my heart thrills  
 With wrath indeed ; and hearken for what cause,  
 That ye against all friendship and good laws  
 Bear off my sister with you ; wherefore now

380

Mars give you courage and a brazen brow !  
That ye may try this dangerous pass in vain,  
For soothly of your slaughter am I fain.'

Then Jason wrathfully threw up his head,  
But ere the shout came, fair Medea said,  
In trembling whisper thrilling through his ear :—

' Haste, quick upon them ! if before is fear,  
Behind is death ! ' Then Jason turning, saw  
A tall ship staggering with the gusty flaw,  
Just entering the long reach where they were,  
And heard her horns through the fresh morning air.

390

Then lifted he his hand, and with a cry .  
Back flew the balanced oars full orderly,  
And toward the doomed ship mighty Argo passed ;  
Thereon Absyrtus shouted loud, and cast  
His spear at Jason, that before his feet  
Stuck in the deck ; then out the arrows fleet  
Burst from the Colchians ; and scarce did they spare  
Medea's trembling side and bosom fair ;  
But Jason, roaring as the lioness  
When round her helpless whelps the hunters press,  
Whirled round his head his mighty brass-bound spear,  
That flying, smote the Prince beneath the ear,  
As Arcas' arrow sunk into his side.

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Then falling, scarce he met the rushing tide,  
Ere Argo's mighty prow had thrust apart  
The huddled oars, and through the fair ship's heart  
Had thrust her iron beak, and the green wave  
Rushed in as rush the waters through a cave  
That tunnels half a sea-girt lonely rock.  
Then drawing swiftly backward from the shock,  
And heeding not the cries of fear and woe,  
They left the waters dealing with their foe ;  
And at the following ship threw back a shout,  
And seaward o'er the bar drove Argo out.

Then joyful felt all men as now at last

From hill to green hill of the sea they passed ;  
 But chiefly joyed Medea, as now grew  
 The Colchian hills behind them faint and blue,  
 And like a white speck showed the following ship.  
 There 'neath the canopy, lip pressed to lip,  
 They sat and told their love, till scarce he thought  
 What precious burden back to Greece he brought  
 Besides the maid, nor for his kingdom cared,  
 As on her beauty with wet eyes he stared,  
 And heard her sweet voice soft as in a dream,  
 When all seems gained, and trouble dead does seem.

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So passed this day, and she no less forgot  
 That wreck upon the bar, the evil spot,  
 Red with a brother's blood, where long was stayed  
 The wrathful king as from the stream he weighed  
 The bleeding body of his well-loved son.

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Lo in such wise their journey was begun,  
 And so began short love and long decay,  
 Sorrow that bides and joy that fleets away.

## X. THE NORTHWARD JOURNEY

The heroes made with all haste for the straits, but at dawn the wind failed and a thick mist enveloped them. Once more the sacred oak-beam in the prow spake forth and gave warning of the fate that lay in store. Æetes with his war-galleys was lying in wait for them at the Bosphorus. Therefore the gods decreed they should find their way back to Iolchos by a route to the north-west. They entered an estuary<sup>1</sup> on the flood-tide and were carried up-river through dark forests peopled by strange beasts and uncouth men. (Book X, 1-230.)

<sup>1</sup> The Dnieper.

BUT every day, more and more sluggishly  
And shorter time, the water from the sea  
Ran up, and failed ere eve of the third day,  
Though slower took the downward stream its way,  
Grown wide and dull ; and here and there the wood  
Would draw away and leave some dismal rood  
Of quaggy land about the river's edge,  
Where 'mid the oozes and decaying sedge  
There wallowed ugly, nameless, dull-scaled things.

These now the weary company of kings,  
As they passed by, could not endure to see  
Unscathed of arrows, turning lazily  
Blue-gleaming slimy sides up in the sun,  
Whose death swift Atalanta first begun.  
For as anigh the prow she chanced to stand,  
Unto her bow did she set foot and hand,  
And strung it, and therefrom an arrow sent  
That through the belly of a monster went,  
Legged like a lizard, maned with long lank hair.  
He, screaming, straight arose from out his lair,  
With many another of his kith and kin,  
And swiftly getting to the water thin,  
Made for the ship ; and though upon the way  
Some few among them lost the light of day,  
Smit by Thessalian arrows, yet the most  
The narrow strip of water fairly crossed,  
And scaled the ship's sides, and therewith began  
A fearful battle betwixt worm and man.

Not long it dured ; though Ceneus through the mail  
Was bitten, and one monster's iron tail  
Smote down Asterion, whom Eribotes  
Made shift to save ; but chiefly amid these  
She who had been the first to raise the strife  
Was hard bested, and scarce escaped with life.

One worm 'twixt ship and shore her arrow slew,  
But ere her amazonian axe she drew,

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Another monster had got slimy hold  
Of her slim ankles, and cast fold on fold  
About her legs, and binding thigh to thigh,  
Wrapt round her sides, enfolding mightily  
Her foiled right hand, then raised aloft his crest      40  
Against her unembraced tender breast ;  
But she, with one unarmed hand yet left free,  
Still strove to ward the blow, but giddily,  
Because the deadly rings still tighter grew  
About her heart ; yet as she fell, there flew  
A feathered javelin swiftly from the left,  
By Arcas desperately cast, that cleft  
The monster's head, and dulled his glittering eyes.

Then the glad Minyæ with joyous cries      50  
Cleared Argo's decks of all the monstrous things,  
As from the maiden's limbs the slimy rings  
Slacked and fell off : but she, so saved from death,  
Sat weary by the mast, and drew glad breath,  
And vowed the grey and deadly thing should shine,  
Wrought all of gold, within Diana's shrine,  
In woody fair Arcadia. But the rest,  
When they with poured-out wine the Gods had blest,  
And flayed the slain worms, gat them to the oar,  
And 'gainst the sluggish stream slid past the shore.      60

Further inland the forests began to thin, and in the clearings herds of deer and wild cattle browsed. The heroes landed and joined in the chase. Arcas and two companions lost their way, and were made captive by wild folk, but at night they eluded their captors and reached the Argo safely.

The stream now began to narrow, the current became swifter, and ahead they heard the thunder of waterfall and cataract. At Erginus' bidding they dragged the Argo ashore, and hauled her on logs along the bank till the rapids were passed. Higher up, the main river was joined by a smoother

branch,<sup>1</sup> on which they launched their boat and gat them onward toward the winter and the north. (Book X, 291-end.)

Now might the Minyæ hoist up to the breeze  
Their well-wrought sail, for barren of all trees  
The banks were now become, not rising high  
Above the deep green stream that sluggishly  
Strove with the strenuous Argo's cleaving stem.

So after all their toil was rest to them  
A little while, and on the deck they sat,  
Not wholly sad, and talked of this and that,  
Or watched the restless fishes turn and wind,  
Or the slim kestrel hanging in the wind,      70  
Or the wild cattle scouring here and there  
About the plain ; for in a plain they were,  
Edged round with hills, with quaggy brooks cleft through,  
That 'mid their sedges toward the river drew,  
And harboured noisome things, and death to man.  
But looking up stream, the green river ran  
Unto their eyes, from out the mountains high,  
For 'twixt no pass could they behold the sky,  
Though at the mountain's foot, far through the plain,  
They saw the wandering river shine again,      80  
Then vanish wholly ; therefore through their ease,  
With fear did they the jealous Gods appease.

Nathelss, for two days did they speed along,  
Not toiling aught, and cheered with tale and song ;      •  
But the third noonday, bringing them anear  
The mountains, turned to certain grief their fear,  
For now they saw the stream, grown swift but deep,  
Come from a cavern in the mountain steep.  
Nor would it help them aught upon that tide  
To heave the swift ship out on either side,      90  
For all that plain the mountain ridge bestrode,  
And scarcely could a horseman find a road

<sup>1</sup> The Pripet.

Through any pass into the farther land.

Then 'mid the downcast men did Jason stand,  
And lifting up his voice, said : ' Minyæ,  
Why right and left upon this plain look ye,  
Where dwell but beasts or beast-like men alone ?  
Look rather to that heap of rugged stone,  
Pierced with the road that leadeth to the north  
Yea, if from very hell this stream runs forth, 100  
Let us go thither, bearing in our hands  
This golden, hard-won marvel of all lands.  
Yet, since not death it bears, but living things,  
Shall we not reach thereby the sea that rings  
The whole world round, and so make shift to reach  
Sunny Eubœa, and fair Argo beach  
Before Iolchos, having lost no whit  
Of all our gains ? Or else here must we sit  
Till hunger slays us on some evil day,  
Or wander till our raiment falls away 110  
From off our bodies, and we, too, become  
Like those ye saw, not knowing any home,  
Voiceless, desiring nought but daily food,  
And seeking that like beasts within the wood,  
Each for himself ; and all our glory gone,  
Our names but left upon some carven stone  
In Greece, still growing fainter day by day.  
And this work wrought within the sunny bay,  
Nor yet without the help of Gods, shall lie  
A wonder to the wild beasts passing by, 120  
While on her fallen masts the sedge-birds sing,  
Unseen of men, a clean forgotten thing.'

So spake he, setting courage in their hearts  
To try the unknown dark, and to their parts  
All gat them swiftly, and they struck the mast,  
And, deftly steered, from out the sunlight passed  
Into the cold, bat-haunted cavern low,  
And, thrusting out with poles, made shift to go

Against the stream that with a hollow sound  
Smote Argo's stem. Then Jason, looking round,  
Trembled himself, for now, indeed, he thought,  
Though to the toiling heroes he said nought :—  
‘ What do we, if this cavern narrows now,  
Or over falls these burrowing waters flow,  
And drive us back again into the sun,  
Cursing the day this quest was first begun,  
Or somewhat traps us here, as well it may,  
And ends us all, far from the light of day ? ’

Therewith he bade them light the torches up,  
And to the mountain Gods to pour a cup,      140  
And one unto the river Gods, and pray  
That they might come into the light of day,  
When they had pierced the mountain through and through.  
So from the torches trains of sparkles flew,  
And strangely flashed their arms in that dark place,  
And white and haggard showed each anxious face  
Against those dripping walls of unknown stone.

But now in Jason's hand the cup outshone,  
Full of red wine, pressed by the Grecian sea,  
And lifting high his hand, he cried : ‘ O ye,      150  
Both Gods and nymphs who in this wild land dwell,  
In hill or river, henceforth may ye tell  
How through your midst have passed the Minyæ ;  
And if, ye helping, the cold northern sea  
We safely reach, and our desired home,  
Thither the fame and fear of you shall come,  
And there a golden-pillared house shall stand,  
Unto our helpers in this savage land.  
Nor when we reach the other side of this  
Grim cavern, due observance shall ye miss,      160  
For whatso on the teeming plain we snare,  
Slain with due rites shall smoke before you there.’

So spake he, and twice poured the fragrant wine ;  
But they, well-pleased to have the gift divine,

And noting well his promises, took heed  
Unto his prayers, and gave the heroes speed.  
Then Jason straightway bade more torches light,  
And Argo pushed along, flared through the night  
Of the dank cavern, and the dull place rang  
With Grecian names, as loud the heroes sang,      170  
For hope had come into their hearts at last.

So through the winding cave three days they passed.  
But on the fourth day Lynceus gave a cry.  
Smiting his palms together, who could spy,  
Far off, a little white speck through the dark,  
As when the 'lated traveller sees the spark  
Of some fair-lighted homestead glitter bright.  
But soon to all men's eyes the joyous sight  
Showed clear, and with redoubled force they pushed  
Swift Argo forth, who through the water rushed      180  
As though she longed for daylight too and air.  
And so within an hour they brought her there,  
And on the outer world the sun shone high,  
For it was noon ; so mooring presently,  
On the green earth they clean forgot their pain,  
For joy to feel the sweet soft grass again,  
And see the fair things of the world, and feel  
The joyous sunlight that the sick can heal,  
And soft tormenting of the western wind.

And there for joy about their heads they twined      190  
The yellow autumn flowers of the field,  
And of untimely sorrow were they healed  
By godlike conquering wine ; nor yet forgot  
Their promise to the Gods, but on that spot,  
Of turf and stones they built up altars twain,  
And sent the hunters forth, and not in vain ;  
For Atalanta, swifter than a man,  
Arcas, and mighty Theseus, overran  
A white high-crested bull, and tough cords threw  
About his horns, and so by main force drew      200

The great beast to the altars, where the knife  
Of wise Asclepius ended his hot life.

As they drew nearer the river's source, the stream became shallow, and so narrow that they could not use the oar. Argus in a dream was counselled by Iris to build a wooden trolley on which to drag the Argo overland to the source of another river<sup>1</sup> that would bring them in the spring into the Northern Seas.<sup>2</sup> Many toilsome days the heroes spent hauling their ship along on its strange waggon. But at length they reached the deep dark river of which Iris had spoken. They broke up their waggon, and of the beams raised up a mighty altar, and on it laid a goodly sacrifice, and burned all in honour of the goddess who had given such timely aid. Meantime winter descended upon them in full blast. As the goddess had bid them, they beached the Argo near a great oak-wood, and built wooden huts to house them for the winter, and a palisade to ward off attack by man or beast. Here for ten dreary weeks they awaited impatiently the coming of spring and beguiled away the time with hunting and feasting and minstrelsy. (Book XI, 143-end.)

March came at last and with it rain and milder winds. The earth soon shed its snowy pall and the river burst violently from its icy bonds. Once more the heroes launched their good ship and joyfully turned her head seawards. They passed through vast wooded plains, and soon reached great marshy flats whence a northern breeze blew that savoured strongly of the sea. Next day they struggled with a will against a full flood-tide : the morrow following they passed out into the open sea upon the ebb. (Book XII, 1-164.)

Now hoisting sail, and labouring with the oar,  
They passed along the amber-bearing shore,  
A low coast, backed by pine-woods : none the less  
Some days they needs must pass in idleness,

<sup>1</sup> The Vistula.

<sup>2</sup> The Baltic.

And lie-to, 'midst white rolling mist and blind,  
Lest Argo on some shallow death should find ;  
Yet holpen by the steersman's mighty sire,  
Safely they sailed until the land rose higher,      210  
And through a narrow strait at last they went,  
Brushing the unknown coast, where, with bows bent,  
They saw a skin-clad folk awaiting them,  
Who stood to watch the well-built Argo stem  
The rushing tide upon the shingly beach,  
And thence, as knowing that they could not reach  
The heroes with their arrows, shook their spears,  
And shouted unknown threats to careless ears.

But when against the midst of them they came,  
Forth strode a huge man, with red hair like flame,      220  
And his huge bow against them strongly drew,  
Wherfrom a swift shaft straight to Argo flew,  
And whistling over Jason's head, stuck fast  
Over the barb-points in the gleaming mast.  
Then all men praised that archer ; but the man  
Who in Arcadian woods all beasts outran,  
Straight drew his bow unto the arrow-head,  
And no man doubted that wild king was dead :  
Nathless, unmoved they saw the archer stand,  
And toward the Arcadian arrow stretch his hand,      230  
That midmost of his skin-clad body smote,  
But bounded back as from an iron coat.  
Then loud his people shouted, and all drew  
Their feeble bows, but short their arrows flew,  
And through the straits the wondering Minyæ  
Passed out unscathed into the open sea,  
While still of wizardry and charms they spoke.

But Jason from the mast the arrow broke,  
That erewhile had so scantily missed his life,  
And found it scored as by a sharp-edged knife,      240  
From barb to notch, with what seemed written words,  
In tongue unknown to aught but beasts and birds ;

So when Medea saw it, straight she said :

‘ Fair love, now praise some God thou art not dead,  
For from the Cimbrian folk this arrow came,  
And its sharp barbs within a wizard’s flame  
Were forged with peril, and the shaft of it  
Was carved by one who in great fear did sit  
Within the haunted places of the wood,  
And tears are on its feathers, and red blood :      250  
Nor ask me now the name of her who taught  
This wisdom to me : but two arrows brought  
From this same folk to Æa have I seen,  
By one whose wounds will evermore be green  
While on the earth he dwells.’ So spoke the maid,  
But Jason, wondering at the words she said,  
Gazed on her fair face, smiling lovingly,  
Nor cared to think that he must one day die.

Lost awhile in the mists of the Northern Seas, they made the narrow straits, and skirted the white-cliffed British coasts. Leaving Britain astern, they entered the open sea and, carried southward by a favouring breeze, they sighted no land until they drew nigh the Pillars of Hercules, through which they pass into the Mediterranean. (Book XII, 220-end.)

## XI. THE SIRENS

The heroes skirted the coasts of Spain and France, and at the end of the fourth day lay to for the night off the coast of Italy. Here was the island of Æaea, the abode of Circe, the queen of sorceresses, and on the morrow Medea landed alone to learn from her what should befall them ere they reached the shores of Thessaly. Circe warned her of the Sirens and counselled her how to avoid the fate of those who fell victims to the fascination of their song. To cleanse away the guilt

of her brother's murder, she bade her land at Cape Malea and offer rich gifts of gold, spices and fair raiment to the folk there in exchange for cattle and wine for a sacrifice to Apollo. Moreover, on drawing nigh Iolchos, the Argonauts must beach their ship, and lie in ambush in the woods, while Medea went alone to the city, and there by her wiles made an end of Pelias' life. (Book XIII.)

Now o'er the open sea they took their way,  
For three days, and at dawning of the day,  
Upon the fourth, saw the Trinacrian shore,  
And there-along they coasted two days more.  
Then first Medea warned them to take heed,  
Lest they should end all memory of their deed  
Where dwell the Sirens on the yellow sand,  
And folk should think some tangled poisonous land  
Had buried them, or some tumultuous sea  
O'er their white bones was tossing angrily ;                                   10  
Or that some muddy river, far from Greece,  
Drove seaward o'er the ringlets of the fleece.

But when the Minyæ hearkened to this word,  
With many a thought their wearied hearts were stirred,  
And longing for the near-gained Grecian land,  
Where in a little while their feet should stand ;  
Yet none the less like to a happy dream,  
Now, when they neared it, did their own home seem,  
And like a dream the glory of their quest,  
And therewithal some thought of present rest                                   20  
Stole over them, and well-nigh made them sigh  
To hear the sighing restless wind go by.

But now, nigh even on the second day,  
As o'er the gentle waves they took their way,  
The orange-scented land-breeze seemed to bear  
Some other sounds unto the listening ear  
Than all day long they had been hearkening—  
The land-born signs of many a well-known thing.

Thereat Medea trembled, for she knew  
That nigh the dreadful sands at last they drew,  
For certainly the Sirens' song she heard,  
Though yet her ear could shape it to no word,  
And by their faces could the queen behold  
How sweet it was, although no tale it told,  
To those worn toilers o'er the bitter sea.

Now, as they sped along, they presently,  
Rounding a headland, reached a little bay,  
Walled from the sea by splintered cliffs and grey,  
Capped by the thymy hills' green wind-beat head,  
Where 'mid the whin the burrowing rabbits fed.  
And 'neath the cliff they saw a belt of sand,  
'Twixt Nereus' pasture and the high scarped land,  
Whereon, yet far off, could their eyes behold  
White bodies moving, crowned and girt with gold,  
Wherfrom it seemed that lovely music welled.

So when all this the grey-eyed queen beheld,  
She said : ' O Jason, I have made thee wise  
In this and other things : turn then thine eyes  
Seaward, and note the ripple of the sea,  
Where there is hope as well as fear for thee.  
Nor look upon the death that lurketh there  
'Neath the grey cliff, though sweet it seems and fair ;  
For thou art young upon this day to die.  
Take then the helm, and gazing steadily  
Upon the road to Greece, make strong thine hand  
And steer us toward the lion-haunted land :  
And thou, O Thracian ! if thou e'er hast moved  
Men's hearts with stories of the Gods who loved,  
And men who suffered, move them on this day,  
Taking the deadly love of death away,  
That even now is stealing over them,  
While still they gaze upon the ocean's hem,  
Where their undoing is if they but knew.'

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But while she spake, still nigher A<sub>g</sub>o drew  
 Unto the yellow edges of the shore,  
 And little help she had of ashen oar,  
 For as her shielded side rolled through the sea,  
 Silent with glittering eyes the Minyæ  
 Gazed o'er the surge, for they were nigh enow  
 To see the gusty wind of evening blow      70  
 Long locks of hair across those bodies white,  
 With golden spray hiding some dear delight ;  
 Yea, nigh enow to see their red lips smile,  
 Wherefrom all song had ceased now for a while,  
 As though they deemed the prey was in the net,  
 And they no more had need a bait to set  
 But their own bodies, fair beyond man's thought,  
 Under the grey cliff, hidden not of aught  
 But of such mist of tears as in the eyes  
 Of those seafaring men might chance to rise.      80

A moment Jason gazed, then through the waist  
 Ran swiftly, and with trembling hands made haste  
 To trim the sail, then to the tiller ran,  
 And thrust aside the skilled Milesian man,  
 Who with half-open mouth, and dreamy eyes,  
 Stood steering Argo to that land of lies ;  
 But as he staggered forward, Jason's hand  
 Hard on the tiller steered away from land,  
 And as her head a little now fell off  
 Unto the wide sea, did he shout this scoff      90  
 To Thracian Orpheus : ‘ Minstrel, shall we die,  
 Because thou hast forgotten utterly  
 What things she taught thee that men call divine,  
 Or will thy measures but lead folk to wine,  
 And scented beds, and not to noble deeds ?  
 Or will they fail as fail the shepherd's reeds  
 Before the trumpet, when these sea-witches  
 Pipe shrilly to the washing of the seas ?  
 I am a man, and these but beasts, but thou

Giving these souls, that all were men ere now  
Shall be a very God and not a man ! ' 100

So spake he : but his fingers Orpheus ran  
Over the strings, and sighing turned away  
From that fair ending of the sunny bay ;  
But as his well-skilled hands were preluding  
What his heart swelled with, they began to sing  
With pleading voices from the yellow sands,  
Clustered together, with appealing hands  
Reached out to Argo as she turned away,  
While o'er their white limbs flew the flakes of spray, 110  
Since they spared not to set white feet among  
The cold waves heedless of their honied song.

Sweetly they sang, and still the answer came  
Piercing and clear from him, as bursts the flame  
From out the furnace in the moonless night ;  
Yet, as their words are no more known aright  
Through lapse of many ages, and no man  
Can any more across the waters wan  
Behold those singing women of the sea,  
Once more I pray you all to pardon me,  
If with my feeble voice and harsh I sing 120  
From what dim memories may chance to cling  
About men's hearts, of lovely things once sung  
Beside the sea, while yet the world was young.

#### THE SIRENS.

Come to the land where none grows old,  
And none is rash or over-bold,  
Nor any noise there is or war,  
Or rumour from wild lands afar,  
Or plagues, or birth and death of kings ;  
No vain desire of unknown things  
Shall vex you there, no hope or fear 130  
Of that which never draweth near ;

But in that lovely land and still  
 Ye may remember what ye will,  
 And what ye will, forget for aye.

So while the kingdoms pass away,  
 Ye sea-beat hardened toilers erst,  
 Unresting, for vain fame athirst,  
 Shall be at peace for evermore,  
 With hearts fulfilled of Godlike lore,  
 And calm, unwavering Godlike love,  
 No lapse of time can turn or move.  
 There, ages after your fair fleece  
 Is clean forgotten, yea, and Greece  
 Is no more counted glorious,  
 Alone with us, alone with us,  
 Alone with us, dwell happily,  
 Beneath our trembling roof of sea.

140

## ORPHEUS.

Ah ! do ye weary of the strife  
 And long to change this eager life  
 For shadowy and dull hopelessness,  
 Thinking indeed to gain no less  
 Than far from this grey light to lie,  
 And there to die and not to die,  
 To be as if ye ne'er had been,  
 Yet keep your memory fresh and green,  
 To have no thought of good or ill,  
 Yet feed your fill of pleasure still ?  
 O idle dream ! Ah, verily  
 If it shall happen unto me  
 That I have thought of anything,  
 When o'er my bones the sea-fowl sing,  
 And I lie dead, how shall I pine  
 For those fresh joys that once were mine,  
 On this green fount of joy and mirth,

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The ever young and glorious earth !  
 Then, helpless, shall I call to mind  
 Thoughts of the sweet flower-scented wind,  
 The dew, the gentle rain at night,  
 The wonder-working snow and white,  
 The song of birds, the water's fall,  
 The sun that maketh bliss of all ;  
 Yea, this our toil and victory,  
 The tyrannous and conquered sea.

170

## THE SIRENS.

Ah, will ye go, and whither then  
 Will ye go from us, soon to die,  
 To fill your three-score years and ten,  
 With many an unnamed misery ?

And this the wretchedest of all,  
 That when upon your lonely eyes  
 The last faint heaviness shall fall  
 Ye shall bethink you of our cries.

180

Come back, nor grown old seek in vain  
 To hear us sing across the sea.  
 Come back, come back, come back again,  
 Come back, O fearful Minyæ !

## ORPHEUS.

Ah, once again, ah, once again,  
 The black prow plunges through the sea,  
 Nor yet shall all your toil be vain,  
 Nor ye forgot, O Minyæ.

190

In such wise sang the Thracian, in such wise  
 Out gushed the Sirens' deadly melodies ;

But long before the mingled song was done,  
Back to the oars the Minyæ, one by one,  
Slunk silently ; though many an one sighed sore,  
As his strong fingers met the wood once more,  
And from his breast the toilsome breathing came.

But as they laboured, some for very shame  
Hung down their heads, and yet amongst them some  
Gazed at the place whence that sweet song had come ; 200  
But round the oars and Argo's shielded side  
The sea grew white, and she began to glide  
Swift through the waters of that deadly bay ;  
But when a long wake now behind her lay,  
And still the whistle of the wind increased,  
Past shroud and mast, and all the song had ceased,  
Butes rose up, the fair Athenian man,  
And with wild eyes betwixt the rowers ran  
Unto the poop and leapt into the sea ;  
Then all men rested on their oars, but he  
Rose to the top, and towards the shore swam fast,  
While all eyes watched him ; who had well-nigh past  
The place where sand and water 'gan to meet  
In wreaths and ripples round the ivory feet,  
When sun-burnt swimmer, snow-white glancing limb,  
And yellow sand unto their eyes grew dim,  
Nor did they see their fellow any more.

Leaving those deadly sands far astern, the Argonauts turned towards the south, and for two days traversed a landless sea. But on the morrow they sighted land again, and there they saw a place lovely beyond compare. Fenced round about with a marble wall stood a fair garden, wherein grew all manner of fruits and flowers in rich abundance, and beasts of all kinds roamed and disported themselves in happy contentment. In the midst was a marble terrace encircled by a clear blue stream, and o'er-topping all a wondrous tree hung with golden apples and guarded by a sleepless dragon.

And there were the daughters of Hesperus, the wise Hesperides, four damsels very fair to look upon. Two lay upon the daisied sward, a third sat on the terrace steps and combed out her hair, and one was bathing in the stream. This last descried the Argo, and, hastily doffing on her raiment of gold, rose and warned her sisters ; and all four joined hands about the tree, singing the while. As the heroes gazed with wonderment and longing at that blissful scene, they were warned by Medea that such happiness was beyond the reach of all save the immortal gods. Though loth to go, they drew away, and turned their prow toward the north.

In two days they made a headland, high and blue, which Erginus knew to be Cape Malea. They cast anchor, and having landed, did all in accordance with Circe's behests. (Book XIV, 456-end.)

## XII. THE RETURN TO IOLCHOS

From Malea they passed into the islanded sea they knew so well ; nor was it long before Eubœa was reached, and they had swept through the perilous straits into the bay of Pagasæ. There they disguised the Argo to look like some old and weathered merchantman ; and when they arrived off the shores of the island Cicynethus, they ran her aground and concealed her cunningly with leafy saplings from the woods near by. They rowed Medea in a shallop to the mainland, and she took leave of Jason and bade him keep close watch for a sign.

In the dark shade of a wood Medea cast aside her fair robes for a peasant's cloak, and by her art transformed herself into an aged ill-favoured crone. She made her way to the city, and, giving out that she possessed the secret of eternal youth, was brought before King Pelias' daughters and thence into the presence of the king himself. Pelias

believed that Jason and his companions had perished and, having made an end of Æson, thought that now there lived no one to dispute his sway. But as old age crept upon him, he grew uneasy and feared to die. Now when he heard Medea's claim that she could make him young once more, he was strangely stirred, and vowed that if it might so come to pass he would forsake his life of treachery and play the tyrant no more. Wherefore he bade his daughters do whatsoever she might bid them, so that the miracle might be wrought.

To prove her words, Medea first resumed the radiant loveliness of youth, and then bade the daughters of the king bring to a dark wood at dead of night an aged ram and a brazen cauldron and put them by a running stream. Thither Medea came, and set them to fill the cauldron with water from the stream, and to place it on a pile of dry twigs. The fire was kindled, and Medea sprinkled upon the water dried herbs from out her wallet. Then she bade them slay the ram and scatter his limbs piecemeal in the seething mixture, and uttered a prayer to Hecate. Whereat the lightning leapt forth, and the thunder crashed, and rain fell in torrents. Presently it ceased, and the daughters of Pelias drew near and saw amid the half-charred embers a new-born lamb all fair and white. "In such wise," said Medea, "must your hands do unto the king that he may be new-born."

So on the sixth morn she gave them her dread commands. "To-night," she said, "must ye steal away to the old deserted temple o'erlooking the bay, and build a pyre of dry brands, and set a huge cauldron upon it. This done, go ye to the palace and mix with Pelias' wine and the wine of his servants this drug that bringeth sleep."

And at midnight, when they had done her bidding, they came and brought her to the temple, and shewed her the pyre and cauldron all prepared. Then they stole away to where Pelias slept, and casting fear and pity aside drew their sharp-edged blades and ended his old life. They threw a pall about

his body, and with beating hearts and halting steps bore it to the temple and laid it by the cauldron's side. When Medea saw it was indeed the body of Pelias, scarce withholding a shout of triumph she plucked a blazing torch, and kindled the pyre therewith, and, waving back the shuddering girls, cast on it something like unto incense. Forthwith shot up a smokeless flame all red and quivering, and Medea, gazing out across the bay, cried aloud to her lover, "Come, conquering king, and sit upon thy father's seat!" (Book XV.)

The watchers on the woody shore of Cicynethus saw the blaze, and straightway Jason put the Argo to sea and made for Iolchos. Meantime the daughters of Pelias, well-nigh frenzied with despair, besought Medea to have pity and to restore to new life the victim of their impious deed. But Medea heeded them not. Presently she heard the grating of the Argo's keel upon the sand, and ran swiftly down to meet her lover, and bade the heroes hie them to the temple to witness the fate of hapless Pelias. Then all with joyous shouts made their way to the market-place, carrying the Golden Fleece strung high upon an oar for all to behold, and bearing aloft the fair Medea upon cushions laid across the staves of their spears, and Jason marched unarmed at the head. (Book XVI, 1-244.)

Now, therefore, when the gates were open wide,  
Shouting, the folk drew back on either side,  
All wild with joy ; but when they did behold  
The high-raised Fleece of curling ruddy gold,  
And the glad heroes' mighty heads beneath,  
And throned Medea, with her golden wreath,  
And folded hands, and chiefest thing of all,  
The godlike man who went beside the pall,  
Whereon the body of their tyrant lay,  
Then did their voices fail them on that day,  
And many a man of weeping there was fain.

At last did Jason set his foot again

Upon the steps of that same ivory throne  
 Where once he fronted Pelias all alone,  
 And bare of friends : but now he turned about,  
 And, 'mid the thunder of the people's shout,  
 Scarce heard his fellows' spears : and by his side  
 There stood his gold-adorned Colchian bride,  
 With glad tears glistening in her sweet grey eyes :  
 And dead, at end of foiled treacheries,      20  
 There lay his foe, the slayer of his kin.

Then did he clasp the hand that lay within  
 His mighty and sword-hardened fingers brown,  
 And cried aloud above the shouting town :—

‘ Tell me, O people of my father's land,  
 Before whose ivory well-wrought throne I stand,  
 And whose fair-towered house mine eyes behold,  
 Glittering with brazen pillars, rich with gold !

‘ A while ago we sailed across the sea,  
 To meet our deaths, if so the thing must be,      30  
 And there had died, had not the kind Gods been,  
 Who sent to us this lovely Colchian queen  
 To be our helper : many a land we saw  
 That knoweth neither tongue of man, or law  
 Of God or man : oft most things did we lack  
 That most men have, as still we struggled back  
 Unto the soft wind and the Grecian sea,  
 Until this morn our keel triumphantly  
 Furrowed the green waves of the well-known bay.  
 There to yon palace did I take my way,      40  
 As one who thought his father's face to see ;  
 Yet landing on the green shore warily,  
 (Since times may change, and friendship come to nought)  
 To this dead man straightway my feet were brought,  
 Whose face I knew, the face of Pelias.

‘ Then still more warily thence did we pass,

Till we met folk who told us everything,  
 Both of the slaying of the godlike king,  
 Æson, my father, and of other folk,  
 And how the whole land groaned beneath the yoke      50  
 Of this dead man, whom sure the Gods have slain  
 That all our labour might not be in vain,  
 Nor we, safe passing through the deadly land,  
 Lie slain in our own country at his hand.  
 So have the Gods wrought, therefore am I here,  
 No shield upon mine arm, no glittering spear  
 In my right hand, but by my unarmed side  
 This Colehian Queen, by many sorrows tried.  
 Therefore, no fear of you is in my heart,  
 And if ye will, henceforth will I depart,      60  
 Nor take mine own ; or if it please this town  
 To slay me, let them lay my dead corpse down,  
 As on his tomb my father's image lies,  
 Like what he was before these miseries  
 Fell on his head. But in no wise will I  
 Take seat beneath this golden canopy,  
 Before ye tell me, people of this land,  
 Whose throne this is before the which I stand,  
 Whose towered house this is mine eyes behold,  
 Girt round with brazen pillars, bright with gold.'      70

Then, ere he ceased, the people's shouts broke in  
 Upon his speech : ' Most glorious of thy kin !  
 Be thou our king—be thou our king alone,  
 That we may think the age of iron gone,  
 And Saturn come with every peaceful thing :—  
 Jason for king ! the Conqueror for king ! '

Therewith the heroes clashed their spears and shields,  
 And as within the many-flowered fresh fields  
 This way and that the slim-stalked flowers do bend,  
 When sweeping gusts the soft west wind doth send      80  
 Among their hosts, so moved the people then,

When ceased the shouting of the armed men.  
 For each unto the other 'gan to speak,  
 And o'er the tall men's heads some dame would seek  
 To raise her child to look upon the king.  
 And as with smiles and laughter many a thing  
 They chattered through the great square joyously,  
 Each careless what his neighbour's words might be,  
 It sounded like some February mead,  
 Where thick the lusted starlings creep and feed,      90  
 And each his own song sings unto his mate,  
 Chiding the fickle spring so cold and late.

But through the happy clamour of the folk,  
 At Jason's bidding, the great trumpet broke,  
 And great Echion's voice rang clear and strong,  
 As he cried silence ; then across the throng,  
 Did Jason cry : ' O people, thanked be ye,  
 That in such wise ye give yourselves to me.  
 And now, O friends, what more is there to say  
 But this ? Be glad, and feast this happy day,      100  
 Nor spend one coin of all your store for this ;  
 Nor shall the altars of the high Gods miss  
 Their due thankoffering : and She chief of all,  
 Who caused that this same happy time should fall,  
 Shall have a tithe of all that 'longs to me.

' And ye, O loved companions o'er the sea,  
 Come to my golden house, and let us feast,  
 Nor let time weary us this night at least ;  
 O ! be so glad that this our happy day  
 For all times past, all times to come may pay.'      10

He ceased, and one more shout the people sent  
 Up to the heavens, as he descending went  
 With the fair Colchian through the joyous folk,  
 From whose well-ordered lane at times there broke  
 Some little child, thrust forward well to see  
 The godlike leader of the Minyæ :  
 Or here and there forth would some young man lean

To gaze upon the beauty of the queen  
A little nearer, as they passed him by.

In such wise triumphantly they went from temple unto temple, and paid due honour to the gods and to Juno, chieftest of all. Thence Jason went to his father's tomb, and found him laid in a lone unkingly grave, and straightway gave orders that a new tomb be built close to the murmuring sea, befitting his royalty. Then to the palace, where in the hall once more the heroes gathered as they had done on the eve ere the quest began. On the morn great games were held in Æson's honour, and, these being done, the heroes, laden with priceless gifts, departed homewards unto many lands.

And now is Jason mighty lord and king,  
And wedded to the fairest queen on earth,  
And with no trouble now to break his mirth ;  
And, loved by all, lives happy, free from blame,  
Nor less has won the promised meed of fame.  
So, having everything he once desired  
Within the wild, ere yet his heart was fired  
By Juno's word, he lives an envied man,  
Holding these things that scarce another can,  
Ease, love, and fame, and youth that knows no dread  
Of any horrors lurking far ahead  
Across the sunny, flowered fields of life :—  
—Youth seeing no end unto the joyous strife.

And thus in happy days, and rest, and peace,  
Here ends the winning of the Golden Fleece.

### XIII. JASON AT CORINTH—THE DEATH OF GLAUCE

TEN years have passed, since in the market-place  
The hero stood with flushed and conquering face,

And life before him like one happy day ;  
But many an hour thereof has passed away  
In mingled trouble and felicity.

And now at Corinth, kissed by either sea,  
He dwells, not governed now or governing,  
Since there his kinsman Creon is a king.

And with him still abides the Colchian,  
But little changed, since o'er the waters wan      10  
She gazed upon the mountains that she knew  
Still lessening as the plunging Argo flew  
Over the billows on the way to Greece.  
But in these ten sweet years of rest and peace  
Two fair man-children has she borne to him,  
Who, joyous, fair of face, and strong of limb,  
Full oft shall hear the glorious story told  
Of Argo and the well-won Fleece of Gold,  
By some old mariner ; and oft shall go  
Where nigh the sea the wind-swept beech-trees grow.      20  
And with a grey old woman tending them,  
Shall make an *Æa* of some beech-tree's stem,  
About whose roots there stands the water black.  
Nor of the fleece shall they have any lack,  
For in the bushes hangs much tangled wool  
From wandering sheep who seek the shadow cool ;  
And for the dragon shall there be thereby  
A many-coloured snake, with glazed dull eye,  
Slain by the shepherd ; so shall pass their days,  
Whom folk look soon to gather wealth and praise.      30

And 'midst these living things has Argo found  
A home here also ; on the spot of ground  
'Twixt Neptune's temple and the eastern sea,  
She looks across the waves unceasingly ;  
And as their ridges draw on toward the land,  
The wind tells stories of the kingly band.  
There, with the fixed and unused oars spread out  
She lies, amidst the ghosts of song and shout,

And merry laughter, that were wont to fill  
Her well-built hollow, slowly dying still,      40  
Like all that glorious company of kings  
Who in her did such well-remembered things.

But as the day comes round when o'er the seas  
She darted 'twixt the blue Symplegades,  
And when again she rushed across the bar,  
With King Æetes following her afar,  
And when at length the heroes laid adown  
The well-worn oars at old King Æson's town,—  
When, year by year, these glorious days came round,  
Bright with gay garments was that spot of ground,      50  
And the grey rocks that o'ertop Cenchreæ  
Sent echoes of sweet singing o'er the sea.

For then the keel the maidens went about  
Singing the songs of Orpheus, and the shout  
Of rough-voiced sea-folk ended every song ;  
And then from stem to stern they hung along  
Garlands of flowers, and all the oars did twine  
With garlands too, and cups of royal wine  
Cast o'er her stem ; and at the stern a maid,  
Clad like to Juno, on the tiller laid      60  
Her slender fingers, while anigh the stem  
Stood one with wings, and many-coloured hem  
About her raiment, like the messenger  
Who bears the high Gods' dreadful words with her,  
And through the sea of old that stem did lead.

Lo, in such wise they honoured that great deed,  
But Jason did they reverence as a God ;  
And though his kinsman bore the ivory rod  
And golden circlet, little could he do  
Unless the great Thessalian willed it too.      70

Therefore, seeing that after him his people would have  
none other than Jason for their king, Creon designed how

he might marry Jason to his daughter Glauce. By subtle hints he contrived to poison Jason's ear against Medea ; and thinking that his scheme would go aright if once he brought him face to face with Glauce, he laid a crafty plot. At that time Glauce dwelt in the woods near Cleonæ, where was a shrine of Juno whose handmaiden she was ; and on a day, when hunting in those woods, by seeming chance he and Jason, as the night began to fall, found themselves alone and far from their attendants in the chase. Then Creon said, " We will repair to a cottage of mine hard by, where dwells my daughter Glauce, and there pass the night in comfort." Thither they went, and Glouce spread her board with such humble cheer as she possessed, and waited on them while they ate and drank. Then Creon filled a wine-cup, and bade his daughter bear it to Jason, and ask him to tell for her the story of the Quest. And when Jason took the cup from her fair hands, his heart was captured with the maiden's loveliness, even as it had been that night in Æetes' hall long years ago when first he gazed upon Medea.

Thenceforward he burned with fierce desire for his new-found love. As time wore on he tired of Medea and, though full oft his conscience pricked him sore when he bethought him of her constancy and how he owed to her his very life, yet his new passion soon silenced his qualms. Then came the fateful day when all the city held high festival in honour of Venus ; and Jason, forgetting all else in the rapture of meeting Glouce, threw his old love to the winds and wooed and won her for his bride. And Creon, seeing his deep-laid schemes bear fruit as he wished, was glad, and gave a day on which they twain should wed. (Book XVII, 95-721.)

Meanwhile, the once-loved sharer of his bed  
Knew all at last, and fierce tormenting fire  
Consumed her as the dreadful day drew nigher,  
And much from other lips than his she heard,  
Till, on a day, this dreadful, blighting word

- Her eyes beheld within a fair scroll writ,  
 And 'twixt her closed teeth still she muttered it :  
     ‘ Depart in peace ! and take great heaps of gold,  
 For nevermore thy body will I fold  
 Within these arms. Let Gods wed Goddesses                          80  
 And sea-folk wed the women of the seas,  
 And men wed women ; but thee, who can wed  
 And dwell with thee without consuming dread,  
 O wise kin of the dreadful sorceress ?  
 And yet, perchance thy beauty still may bless  
 Some man to whom the world seems small and poor,  
 And who already stands beside his door,  
 Armed for the conquest of all earthly things.
- ‘ Lo, such an one, the vanquisher of kings  
 And equal to the Gods, should be thy mate.                          90  
 But me, who for a peaoeful end but wait,  
 Desiring nought but love—canst thou love me ?  
 Or can I give my whole heart up to thee ?
- ‘ I hear thee talk of old days thou didst know—  
 Are they not gone ?—wilt thou not let them go,  
 Nor to their shadows still cling desperately,  
 Longing for things that never more can be ?
- ‘ What ! wilt thou blame me still that the times change?  
 Once through the oak-wood happy did I range,  
 And thought no ill ; but then came over me                          100  
 Madness, I know not why, and o'er the sea  
 I needs must go in strife to win me fame,  
 And certes won it, and my envied name  
 Was borne with shouts about the towns of Greece.
- ‘ All that has vanished now, and my old peace,  
 Through lapse of changing years, has come to me.  
 Once more I seem the woodland paths to see,  
 Tunes of old songs are ringing in mine ears,  
 Heard long ago in that place free from fears,  
 Where no one wept above his fellow dead,                          110  
 And looked at death himself with little dread.

The times are changed, with them is changed my heart,  
Nor in my life canst thou have any part,  
Nor can I live in joy and peace with thee,  
Nor yet, for all thy words, canst thou love me.

‘ Yet, is the world so narrow for us twain  
That all our life henceforth must be but vain ?  
Nay, for departing shalt thou be a queen  
Of some great world, fairer than I have seen,  
And wheresoe’er thou goest shalt thou fare  
As one for whom the Gods have utmost care.’

120

Yea, she knew all ; yet when these words she read,  
She felt as though upon her bowed-down head  
Had fallen a misery not known before,  
And all seemed light that erst her crushed heart bore,  
For she was wrapped in uttermost despair,  
And motionless within the chamber fair  
She stood, as one struck dead and past all thought.

But as she stood, a sound to her was brought  
Of children’s voices, and she ’gan to wail.  
With tearless eyes, and, from writhed lips and pale,  
Faint words of woe she muttered, meaningless,  
But such as such lips utter none the less.  
Then all at once thoughts of some dreadful thing  
Back to her mind some memory seemed to bring,  
As she beheld the casket gleaming fair,  
Wherin was laid that she was wont to wear,  
That in the philtre lay that other morn,  
And therewithal unto her heart was borne  
The image of two lovers, side by side.

130

Then with a groan the fingers that did hide  
Her tortured face slowly she drew away,  
And going up to where her tablets lay,  
Fit for the white hands of the Goddesses,  
Therein she wrote such piteous words as these.

140

‘Would God that Argo’s brazen-banded mast  
’Twixt the blue clashing rocks had never passed  
Unto the Colchian land ! Or would that I  
Had had such happy fortune as to die  
Then, when I saw thee standing by the Fleece,  
Safe on the long-desired shore of Greece !

150

Alas, O Jason ! for thy cruel praise !  
Alas, for all the kindness of past days !  
That to thy heart seems but a story told  
Which happed to other folk in times of old.  
But unto me, indeed, its memory  
Was bliss in happy hours, and now shall be  
Such misery as never tongue can tell.

‘Jason, I heed thy cruel message well,  
Nor will I stay to vex thee, nor will stay  
Until thy slaves thrust me thy love away.  
Be happy ! think that I have never been—  
Forget these eyes, that none the less have seen  
Thy hands take life at my hands, and thy heart  
O’erflow in tears, when needs was we should part  
But for a little ; though, upon the day  
When I for evermore must go away,  
I think, indeed, thou wilt not weep for this ;  
Yea, if thou wepest then, some honied kiss  
From other lips shall make thy grey eyes wet,  
Betwixt the words that bid thee to forget  
Thou ever hast loved aught but her alone.

160

‘Yet of all times mayst thou remember one,  
The second time that ever thou and I  
Had met alone together—mournfully  
The soft wind murmured on that happy night ;  
The round moon, growing low, was large and bright,  
As on my father’s marble house it gleamed ;  
While from the fane a baneful light outstreamed,  
Lighting the horror of that prodigy,  
The only fence betwixt whose wrath and thee

170

180

Was this poor body. Ah ! thou knowest then  
 How thou beheldst the shadows of thy men  
 Steal silently towards Argo's painted head.  
 Thou knowest yet the whispered words I said  
 Upon that night—thou never canst forget  
 That happy night of all nights. Ah ! and yet  
 Why make I these long words, that thou the more  
 Mayst hate me, who already hat'st me sore,  
 Since 'midst thy pleasure I am grown a pain.

190

‘ Be happy ! for thou shalt not hear again  
 My voice, and with one word this scroll is done—  
 Jason, I love thee, yea, love thee alone—

‘ All would I do, that I have done erewhile,  
 To have thy love once more, and feel thy smile  
 As freed from snow about the first spring days  
 The meadows feel the young sun's fickle rays.

‘ But I am weak, and past all, nor will I  
 Pray any more for kindly memory ;  
 Yet shalt thou have one last gift more from me,  
 To give thy new love, since men say that she  
 Is fairer than all things man can behold.

‘ Within this casket lies in many a fold  
 Raiment that my forgotten limbs did press,  
 When thou wert wont to praise their loveliness.  
 Fear not to take it from the sorceress' hands,  
 Though certainly with balms from many lands  
 Is it made fragrant, wondrous with a charm  
 To guard the wearer's body from all harm.

‘ Upon the morn that she shall make thee glad,  
 With this fair tunic let her limbs be clad ;  
 But see that no sun falls upon its folds  
 Until her hand the king, her father, holds,  
 To greet thine eyes : then, when in godlike light  
 She shines, with all her beauty grown so bright,  
 That eyes of men can scarcely gaze thereon—  
 Then, when thy new desire at last is won—

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210

Then, wilt thou not a little think of me,  
Who saved thy life for this felicity ?'

But Jason, when he read that bitter word  
Was sore ashamed, and in his ears he heard  
Words that men durst not speak before his face ;  
Therewith, for very shame, that silver case  
And what it held he sent unto his bride,  
And therewithal this word : ' Whatso betide,  
Let not the sun shine on it till the hour  
When thou hast left for aye thy maiden bower,  
And with the king thou standest in the hall,  
Then unto thee shall all good things befall.'

So to his rest he went, but, sooth to say,  
He slept but little till the dawn of day,  
So troubled was his mind with many a thing,  
And in his ears long-spoken words did ring.  
' Good speed, O traitor ! who shall think to wed  
Soft limbs and white, and find thy royal bed  
Dripping with blood and burning up with fire.'

So there, 'twixt fear and shame and strong desire,  
Sleepless he lay until the day began—  
The conqueror, the king, the envied man.

But on the chamber where sweet Glauce lay,  
Fair broke the dawning of that dreadful day,  
And fairer from her bed did she arise,  
And looking down with shamefast timid eyes,  
Beheld the bosom that no man had seen,  
And round limbs worthy of the Sea-born Queen.  
With that she murmured words of joy and love,  
No louder than the grey, pink-footed dove,  
When at the dawn he first begins his tale,  
Not knowing if he means a song or wail.

Then soon her maidens came, and every rite  
That was the due of that slim body white,

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They wrought with careful hands ; and last they took  
Medea's gift, and all the folds outshook,  
And in a cool room looking toward the north,  
They clad the queen therewith, nor brought her forth  
Till over all a gold cloak they had laid.

Then to King Creon did they bring the maid,  
Rejoicing in the greatness of her love,  
Which well she thought no lapse of time could move,  
And on the dais of the royal hall  
They waited till the hour should baffle  
When Jason and his friends would bear her thence  
With gentle rape and tender violence,  
As then the manner was ; and the old king  
Sat there beside her, glad at every thing.

Meanwhile the people thronged in every way,  
Clad in gay weed, rejoicing for that day,  
Since that their lords had bidden them rejoice ;  
And in the streets was many a jocund voice,  
That carolled to the honour of the twain  
Who on that day such blissful life should gain.

But Jason set out from his pillared house,  
Clad in rich raiment, fair and amorous,  
Forgetful of the troubles of the night,  
Nor thinking more of that impending blight,  
Nor those ill words the harpies spoke of old,  
As with his fellows, glittering with gold,  
Towards Creon's palace did he take his way,  
To meet the bride that he should wed that day.

But in the hall the pillars one by one  
Had barred the pathway of the travelling sun,  
As toward the west he turned, and now at last  
Upon the dais were his hot rays cast,  
As they within heard the glad minstrelsy  
Of Jason to his loved one drawing nigh.

Then Creon took fair Glauce by the hand,  
And round about her did her damsels stand,

260

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280

Making a ring 'gainst that sweet violence,  
That soon should bear their lovely mistress thence.  
While Glauce, trembling with her shamefast joy,  
With the gold mantle's clasp began to toy,  
Eager to cast that covering off, and feel  
The hero's mighty arms about her steal.

290

Meanwhile, her lover through the court had passed,  
And at the open door he stood at last,  
Amidst his friends, and looking thence, he saw  
The white arms of the damsels round her draw  
A wall soon to be broken ; but her face  
Over their flower-crowned heads made glad the place :  
Giddy with joy one moment did he gaze  
And saw his love her slender fingers raise  
Unto the mantle's clasp—the next the hall  
Was filled with darting flames from wall to wall,  
And bitter screams rang out, as here and there,  
Scorched, and with outspread arms, the damsels fair  
Rushed through the hall ; but swiftly Jason ran,  
Grown in one moment like an old worn man,  
Up to the dais, whence one bitter cry  
He heard, of one in utmost agony,  
Calling upon his once so helpful name.  
But when unto the fiery place he came,  
Nought saw he but the flickering tongues of fire  
That up the wall were climbing high and higher  
And on the floor a heap of ashes white,  
The remnant of his once beloved delight,  
For whom his ancient love he cast away,  
And of her sire who brought about that day.

300

Then he began to know what he had done,  
And madly through the palace did he run,  
Calling on Glouce, mingling with her name  
The name of her that brought him unto fame,  
Colchian Medea, who, for her reward,

310

320

Had lonely life made terrible and hard,  
By love cast back, within her heart to grow,  
To madness and the vengeance wrought out now ;  
But as about the burning place he ran,  
Full many a maid he met and pale-faced man,  
Wild with their terror, knowing not what end  
That which their eyes had seen might yet portend :  
But these shrunk backward from his brandished sword,  
And open shouting mouth, and frenzied word,      331  
As still from chamber unto chamber fair  
He rushed, scarce knowing what he sought for there,  
Nor where he went, till his unresting feet  
Had borne him out at last into the street,  
Where armed and unarmed people stood to gaze  
On Creon's palace that began to blaze  
From every window out into the air,  
With strange light making pale that noontide fair.

#### XIV. THE DEATH OF JASON

CREON now being slain,  
And Corinth kingless, every man was fain,  
Remembering Jason's wisdom and sharp sword,  
To have the hero for their king and lord.  
So on his weary brows they set the crown,  
And he began to rule that noble town.  
And 'midst all things, somewhat his misery  
Was dulled unto him, as the days went by,  
And he began again to cast his eyes  
On lovely things, and hope began to rise  
Once more within his heart.      10

But on a day  
From out the goodly town he took his way,  
To where, beneath the cliffs of Cenchreæ,

Lay Argo, looking o'er the ridgy sea,  
 Being fain once more to ponder o'er past days,  
 Ere he should set his face to winning praise  
 Among the shouts of men and clash of steel.

But when he reached the well-remembered keel,  
 The sun was far upon his downward way,  
 At afternoon of a bright summer day.

20

Hot was it, and still o'er the long rank grass,  
 Beneath the hull, a widening shade did pass ;  
 And further off, the sunny daisied sward,  
 The raised oars with their creeping shadows barred ;  
 And grey shade from the hills of Cenchree  
 Began to move on toward the heaving sea.

So Jason, lying in the shadow dark  
 Cast by the stem, the warble of the lark,  
 The chirrup of the cricket, well could hear ;  
 And now and then the sound would come anear  
 Of some hind shouting o'er his laden wain.  
 But looking o'er the blue and heaving plain,  
 Sailless it was, and beaten by no oar,  
 And on the yellow edges of the shore  
 The ripple fell in murmur soft and low,  
 As with wide-sweeping wings the gulls did go  
 About the breakers crying plaintively.

30

But Jason, looking out across the sea,  
 Beheld the signs of wind a-drawing nigh,  
 Gathering about the clear cold eastern sky ;  
 And many an evening then he thought upon  
 Ere yet the quays of Æa they had won,  
 And longings that had long been gathering  
 Stirred in his heart ; and now he felt the sting  
 Of life within him, and at last he said :—  
 ‘ Why should I move about as move the dead,  
 And take no heed of what all men desire ?  
 Once more I feel within my heart the fire  
 That drove me forth unto the white-walled town,

40

Leaving the sunny slopes, and thick-leaved crown  
Of grey old Pelion, that alone I knew,  
Great deeds and wild, and desperate things to do.

‘ Ah ! the strange life of happiness and woe  
That I have led, since my young feet did go  
From that grey, peaceful, much-loved abode !  
But now, indeed, will I cast off the load  
Of memory of vain hopes that came to nought,  
Of rapturous joys with biting sorrows bought.  
The past is past, though I cannot forget  
Those days, with long life laid before me yet.’

59

60

So saying, gazing still across the sea  
Heavy with days and nights of misery,  
His eyes waxed dim, and calmer still he grew,  
Still pondering over times and things he knew,  
While now the sun had sunk behind the hill  
And from a white-thorn nigh a thrush did fill  
The balmy air with echoing minstrelsy,  
And cool the night-wind blew across the sea,  
And round about the soft-winged bats did sweep.

So ‘midst all this at last he fell asleep,  
Nor did his eyes behold another day ;  
For Argo, slowly rotting all away,  
Had dropped a timber here, and there an oar,  
All through that year, but people of the shore  
Set all again in order as it fell ;  
But now the stempost, that had carried well,  
The second rafter in King Pelias’ hall,  
Began at last to quiver towards its fall,  
And whether loosed by some divinity,  
Or that the rising wind from off the sea  
Blew full upon it, surely I know not—  
But, when the day dawned, still on the same spot,  
Beneath the ruined stem did Jason lie  
Crushed, and all dead of him that here can die.

70

80

What more ?—Some shepherd of the lone grey slope,  
Drawn to the sandy sea-beach by the hope  
Of trapping quick-eared rabbits, found him there,  
And running back, called from the vineyards fair  
Vine-dressers and their mates who through the town  
Ere then had borne their well-filled baskets brown.      90  
These, looking on his dead face, straightway knew  
This was the king that all men kneeled unto,  
Who dwelt between the seas ; therefore they made  
A bier of white-thorn boughs, and thereon laid  
The dead man, straightening every drawn-up limb ;  
And, casting flowers and green leaves over him,  
They bore him unto Corinth, where the folk,  
When they knew all, into loud wailing broke,  
Calling him mighty hero, crown of kings.

But him ere long to where the sea-wind sings      100  
O'er the grey hill-side did they bear again.  
And there, where he had hoped that hope in vain,  
They laid him in a marble tomb carved fair  
With histories of his mighty deeds ; and there  
Such games as once he loved yet being alive,  
They held for ten days, and withal did give  
Gifts to the Gods with many a sacrifice ;  
But chiefest, among all the things of price,  
Argo they offered to the Deity  
Who shakes the hard earth with the rolling sea.      110

And now is all that ancient story told  
Of him who won the guarded Fleec of Gold.

## QUESTIONS

### I.

Line.

15. Explain the phrase 'to bay.' What does 'bay' mean as a verb?
25. What does 'high' mean? Give other examples of this meaning.
26. Parse 'garland.'
32. What does 'or' mean?
40. Give other meanings of the noun 'rout.' What connection is there between 'rout' and 'route'?

### II.

3. What is the modern equivalent of 'did on'? Give its opposite.
40. What part of speech is 'needs'? Analyse the sentence.
61. Parse 'clomb.'
- 91-93. Analyse 'for the latchet . . . to the sea.'
95. Explain the reference.
110. What does 'ban' mean as a noun?
121. Give derivation of 'uncouth.' In what modern phrase does 'weed' survive in this sense? Cf. XIII, 267.
122. Criticise this line.
147. Explain the reference here.
155. What is the usual modern meaning of 'bandy' as a verb? What is the connection between it and the adjective 'bandy'?
189. Parse 'fain.'
203. What other meanings has the noun 'press,' and what is the idea connecting them all?

## III.

Line.

7. What is the force of the suffix in 'lordship' ? Give other examples.
12. What is the meaning of 'tide' in 'summer-tide' ? Which is the older meaning—this or that current to-day ?
23. Is the 'local colour' at fault here ?
- 38-42. Comment on the tenses of the verbs.
61. Parse 'them.'
64. Explain construction of 'unwept of damsels.'
69. What is the force of the prefix in 'forlorn' ? Cf. V, 166.
73. Explain 'wingéd wish.'
85. Parse 'right.'
97. Why 'spotless' beasts ?
102. Who was 'the God' ?
113. What is the meaning of 'brand' here ? Give other meanings and show how they are connected.

Describe the scene which appears to you most reminiscent of mediaeval times.

What is a literary epithet ? Illustrate from the text.

Make a list of epithets applied by Morris to the sea.

In what ways would you say the description in III, 120-133 is peculiarly effective ?

What was the attitude of the Greeks toward the sea ? Account for it. Read the chapter on Greek mariners in Kinglake's *Eothen*.

## IV.

3. Explain 'in goodly wise.' Give examples of 'wise' used as a suffix. What is the connection between 'wise' and 'guise' ?
20. Who was 'Alcmena's godlike son' ?
21. Explain 'half-halting.'
22. What do you know of the story of Polyphemus and Odysseus ?
25. Give the meaning of 'governed by some wayward star'. Give other examples of metaphorical uses of astronomical terms.
30. Explain construction of 'haunted of.' Cf. III, 64.
36. Would 'down-swinging' be allowed in prose ? Give a reason. Here 'down-swing' means the same as 'swing down.' Give examples of adverb-verb compounds which

Line

have not the same meaning when the adverb is used separately after the verb (*e.g.* upset, set up).

41. Explain suffix in 'darksome.' Give other examples.
43. Why 'helpless'?
51. What is the meaning here of 'outlandish'? What is the modern meaning? What was a 'Utlander'? Cf. IX, 284. Give examples of the different meanings of the adjectival suffix '-ish.'
53. Which is the older form, 'bide' or 'abide'? What is the difference in meaning?

How many lines in the first hundred of this passage consist of monosyllables only? Is the prevalence of monosyllabic lines a merit or a defect in Morris' versification, or both? Give reasons.

109. Morris uses 'wan' as an epithet of water innumerable times. Do you think it is an expressive epithet? Is its constant use wearisome? Give reasons. What position in the line does it usually occupy? Does this suggest a reason for its frequent recurrence?
150. Give prose equivalent of 'mindeth.'
151. Parse 'that.'
163. Give meaning and derivation of 'demon.'
173. Why does he call his arms 'toys'?
206. What is the reference here?
272. Compare the use of 'unused' here with that in VI, 102, and VIII, 166.

Give examples of Morris's fondness for the weak, unstressed final syllable. What English poet first used this metrical device to any extent? Does Morris overdo it?

## V.

- 2, 7. What sea is referred to? Why is it called 'ill' and 'evil'? What did the Greeks call it and why?
4. What is the prose equivalent of 'hardihead'? Collect other examples of Morris's fondness for similar compounds. Are they false archaisms?
6. Explain the grammar of 'needs must we go.'
17. Find two similes in the foregoing lines. Comment on their appropriateness.
- 35, 38. Scan these lines.
- 59, 60. What is the figure of speech used in these lines?

**Line**

- 60, 62. What metrical device is used in these lines ?
97. Explain the reference.
102. What is the usual name given to these monsters ?
116. Comment on the formation of 'drouth.' What is the parallel form in prose ?
119. Who are the furies ?
120. Explain the reference.
121. What is this use of the word 'lucky' called ?
132. Give meaning and derivation of 'braveries.'
- 138-141. Analyse these lines.
144. There are many references in the above lines to Phineus' 'wisdom' and 'knowledge.' Tell his story shortly, and explain the cause of his visitation by the gods.
151. Who were the Northwind's offspring ?
166. What is the force of fore- and for- in compounds ? Did Morris mean 'foreworead' here ? Give a reason.
185. To whom does this line refer ?
- 188-196. How was this prophecy fulfilled ?
204. What is the meaning of 'foolish' here ? Can you justify its use in this sense ? If not, can you suggest any plausible reason why Morris should have written it ?
213. Is 'light' or 'alight' the correct form ? Give the past tenses and past participles of these verbs.

Illustrate Morris's fondness for compound epithets from the above passage.

Morris frequently uses the expletives 'do' and 'did.' Find instances in this passage. Is this use a merit or fault ? Give a reason.

## VI.

3. Why 'gainful' ?
10. Parse 'nothing.'
21. Who were the 'giant's brood' ?
26. Give prose equivalent for 'at point.'
30. Give meaning and derivation of 'adamantine.'
34. Who was the 'herald' ?
40. What figure of speech is illustrated by this line ?
42. Comment on the phrase 'linger'd out.'
59. Comment on this line.

Line.

- 86-94. What are the merits of this passage as a piece of *graphic* description ?
137. Parse 'good.'
141. What is 'woad' ?
144. What is the meaning of 'doubt us friends' ?
161. What does 'lightly' mean ? Cf. 214.
177. Who was the 'guest' ?
206. Explain 'lading.'

## VII.

10. What figures of speech are illustrated by this line ? Give the history of the word 'pef.'?
17. Give the derivation and history of the word 'cunning.'
18. Give a synonym for 'foreshowing.'
24. Give meaning of 'presently.'
34. From what language do we get 'dais' ?
45. Why was Athamas 'unlucky' ?
59. What does 'acre' signify ?
60. Comment on the metre.
61. Is 'serpents' correct ?
62. Where was the 'sunless heath' ?
64. Parse 'nothing.'
65. Parse 'garner.'
- 95-99. Analyse.
102. Give derivation of 'reckless.' What is the plural of 'die' ?
106. Distinguish between 'loth,' 'loath' and 'loathe.'
107. Explain the figure of speech in 'honied pain.'
120. Give the meaning of 'withal.'
131. Give the meaning of 'apace.'
147. Explain 'gross and palpable.' Are they suitable words to use in verse ? Give reasons.
168. Give prose equivalent of 'whiles.'
177. What is the difference in meaning between 'damp' and 'dank' ?
188. What exactly does 'sullen' mean in reference to a fire ? Name the device which applies to inanimate objects epithets properly belonging to the emotions of conscious beings.
190. Give the literal and derived meanings of 'fret.'

Line.

196. Whom is Medea addressing ? Account for the name  
 ‘Three-formed.’ Cf. IX, 127-9.
- 196-203. Write a prose version of these lines.
214. What deeds are referred to ?
225. Explain ‘better at need.’
228. What does ‘zone’ mean here ? Trace the connection between this and the modern prose use of the word.
230. Criticise the metre.
239. What island is referred to ?
254. Is the prodelision defensible here ? Give a reason.
306. Explain the reference and the significance of the epithets.
307. What does ‘pin’ mean ?
314. What would be written in prose for ‘abode’ ?
335. Notice here the correct use of ‘awful.’ What is the common incorrect use ? Cf. VIII, 113.
346. What is the figure of speech here ? Cf. 107.
355. What does ‘score’ mean here ? What other meanings does it bear as a verb ? Cf. X, 240.
359. Give meaning and derivation of ‘whit.’
360. What does ‘virtue’ mean here ? Give other examples of similar uses in English literature. Cf. VIII, 465.
364. Is ‘or’ correct or should it be ‘nor’ ? Give a reason.
368. In what sense is ‘horrid’ used here ? Give derivation.
386. What special significance has the number seven ?
388. What is ‘keel’ used for here ? What is this device called ? Give other examples.
421. Give the meaning of ‘lists.’
452. Explain ‘instant.’

Give examples from this book of Morris’s inventive fertility.  
 ‘Morris’s verse is characterised by lack of elision and absence of syllables of natural metrical weight.’ Choose any fifty consecutive lines in this book, and prove or disprove this estimate.

## VIII.

5. What is the meaning of ‘forthright’ ? Comment on its formation. Give other examples of the suffix -right in this sense.
10. What does ‘pall’ mean here ? What is the modern meaning ? Give other examples of words which at first had

Line

- general meanings and which are now restricted in their application.
20. What is meant by 'toy'? Cf. IV, 173.
  46. Parse 'dight' and give its meaning and that of 'close.'
  55. Comment on the appropriateness of the adj. 'glassy.'
  63. Give the meaning and derivation of 'monstrous.'
  64. Why 'stupid' rage?
  67. What kind of a word would you call 'clangorous'?
  70. Parse 'but'
  74. Where was 'the doubtful sea'?
  - 95, 96. Express simply in prose.
  109. What is meant by 'apart from his desire'?
  135. Find a previous reference to Anaurus. What is meant by 'on that other tide'?
  140. Give meaning and derivation of 'grisly.' Has it any connection with 'grizzly'?
  156. What does 'pain' mean here? What word would be more appropriate in prose?
  169. What does 'fallow' mean here? What is the usual meaning? What is the modern form of 'loathly'?
  - 171-176. State in plain, unfigurative language what Jason means in these lines.
  191. Comment on the form of 'unholpen.'
  195. Give meaning and derivation of 'askance.'
  202. What is the meaning of 'foil' here? What other meanings does the word have? Show the connection between them.
  206. Give prose equivalent for 'spill.' Compare the meaning in VII, 22.
  259. Comment on this line.
  286. Comment on the form of 'foughten.' What does 'field' stand for?
  308. What is the figure of speech used here?
  309. Give derivation of 'doom.'
  324. What does 'tide' mean here? Cf. III, 12, and VIII, 135.
  343. Explain 'satiate of fight.'
  - 343-6. Paraphrase.
  368. Explain the reference.
  - 379-381. Express simply in prose.
  446. Does this line jar upon the ear? If so, why?
  457. Give meaning and derivation of 'sere-cloth.'

- Collect and classify the similes in this book.  
 Find evidences of mediaeval atmosphere in this book.  
 Describe the scene of the tasks from Medea's point of view,  
*i.e.* as she might have described it to a confidante.

## IX.

Line

1. Give the meaning and derivation of ' precinct '.
42. What does ' ruth ' mean ?
50. Give the meaning of ' lank. '
76. Explain ' in thy despite.' Which is the older word, ' spite ' or ' despite ' ?
92. Who was the ' God of Day ' ?
99. Who was the ' slim messenger ' ?
104. Why ' twice-washed ' ?
- 105, 7. Who were ' the dread Lord ' and ' the flower-culling maid ' ?
158. What was the name of the ' brown bird ' ?
182. Give a prose synonym for ' meed. '
189. Explain ' far-babbled. '
- 212, 3. Explain the reference.
221. Explain ' stark ' ?
234. Why ' shielded ' ?
241. What does ' yare ' mean ?
242. Give the meaning of ' rack.' Is this the correct spelling, or should it be ' wrack ' ?
252. Give modern equivalent for ' reck. '
263. Who was Absyrtus ?
289. What is meant by ' measured oars ' ?
338. What is the meaning of ' odds ' ? Explain how it comes to have this meaning.
357. Parse ' sharp. '
369. Comment on the form of ' unfoughten. '
383. What does ' pass ' mean here ?
422. Give the meaning and derivation of ' canopy. '
- 435, 6. What figure of speech is used here ?

Describe one scene in the foregoing narrative which you think Morris has handled with especial skill. Give reasons for your choice.

Describe the departure of the Argo from the point of view of a Colchian warrior who is aroused from sleep by the sounding of the alarm.

In what details does Morris's version of the Argo's departure differ from the usually accepted version?

'Morris amplifies his narrative with a wealth of circumstantial detail.' Illustrate this from the text and show how it affects our interest and pleasure in the story.

From the last three books what conclusions can you draw concerning Morris's own personal tastes or pursuits?

## X.

Line

6. Give meaning and derivation of 'rood.'
19. What figure of speech is illustrated here?
25. Comment on the form of 'smit.'
29. Comment on the form of 'dured.'
34. What does 'bested' mean? Parse it.
36. Why is her axe called 'amazonian'?
41. Comment on the use and meaning of 'foiled.'
44. What would be written in prose for 'ward'?
54. What would a prose writer put for 'drew glad breath'?
59. What is meant by 'flayed'?
71. Give a synonym for 'scouring.'
75. Give meaning and derivation of 'noisome.'
77. What is meant by 'from out'? Give other examples of two prepositions used conjointly.
- 81, 2. Explain 'therefore . . . appease.'
91. Express by means of a simile.
- 104, 5. Explain the reference.
113. Give a prose synonym for 'voiceless.'
118. Where was 'the sunny bay'?
124. What is meant by 'parts'?
125. What is meant by 'striking the mast'?
149. Explain 'pressed by the Grecian sea.'
176. What does 'lated' stand for?
189. What have you to say about the expression 'soft tormenting'?
192. Give a prose synonym for 'untimely.'
200. What does 'by main force' mean?

Lime.

202. Why 'hot'?
204. 'Amber-bearing.' What does this tell us of the whereabouts of this district?
207. Give the meaning of 'lie-to.'
209. Explain the reference.
218. Why 'careless'?
225. Who was 'the man'?
239. Distinguish between 'scantly' and 'scantily.'
254. 'Green'—is this to be understood literally?

Indicate by means of a sketch-map the route taken by the Argonauts on their homeward journey as far as the Pillars of Hercules. How far is this route Morris's own invention?

## XI.

15. Explain 'near-gained.'
25. Why 'orange-scented'?
40. What is 'whin'?
42. Who was Nereus? What does 'scarp'd' mean?
56. Where was the 'lion-haunted' land?
57. Who was 'the Thracian'?
- 75, 6. Express the sense, eliminating the metaphor.
81. Explain 'waist.'
83. What is meant by 'trim the sail'?
84. Who was 'the Milesian man'?
89. Explain the nautical term here.
93. Who was Orpheus' mother?
- 120-124. Can you suggest any reason for this sudden intrusion of the first person?
- 149-158. Paraphrase.
204. What does 'wake' mean?
206. What is a 'shroud'?
209. What part of a ship is the poop?
215. Explain 'glancing.'
217. What happened to Butes?

What is your estimate of Medea's character up to this point in the story?

What do you know of Odysseus's experiences with the Sirens and Circe?

## XII.

Line

8. Compare the meaning of 'pall' here with that in VIII, 10.
14. What would be written in prose for 'fronted'?
- 29-33. Analyse.
31. Explain 'had not the kind Gods been.'
46. Sean this line.
68. Comment on the presence of 'the' before 'which.'
- 74, 5. Explain the references.
- 77-92. Find two similes in this passage and comment on their appropriateness.
89. Distinguish between 'mead' and 'meed.'
103. Who is 'She'?
105. What is the literal meaning of 'tithe'?
- 109-110. Analyse.
126. What is meant by 'within the wild'?

Describe the scene of Jason's acclamation in your own words.

By what means does Morris contrive to bring this scene vividly before our eyes?

So far the career of Jason has been one of uninterrupted success; fortune has smiled upon him at every turn. Yet if you look carefully you will find foreshadowings of a tragic ending. Where do they lie?

## XIII.

6. Explain 'kissed by either sea.'
30. Criticise the grammar of this line.
62. Why 'many-coloured'?
84. Who was 'the dreadful sorceress'?
103. What language is 'certes'?
121. Summarise Jason's appeal in your own words.
138. Explain 'philtre.'
143. What are 'tablets'?
152. Why does she call Jason's praise 'cruel'?
161. Parse 'me.'
164. Explain the reference.
176. When was 'that happy night'?
180. Explain 'prodigy.' What other meanings does it bear?

<sup>Line</sup>

181. Explain 'fence.' Give the derivation.
184. Scan.
212. Why? (see l. 225 *sqq.* and l. 254.)
- 203-219. Find examples of irony.
230. Give prose for 'sooth to say.'
- 234-236. Who spoke these words, and on what occasion?
243. What does 'shamefast' mean? Is 'shamefast' or 'shame-faced' the correct spelling?
245. Who was 'the Sea-born Queen'?
264. What was the custom? How did it arise?
288. Comment on the expression 'sweet violence.'
- 294-317. What are the merits of this passage as a piece of graphic description?
- 322-325. 'Who . . . now.' Express simply in prose.

Revise and amplify your estimate of Medea's character in the light of the events in this book.

#### XIV.

21. What does 'rank' mean here? Give an example of its use in a figurative sense.
31. What is a wain? In what expression does it survive to-day?
42. What is the meaning of 'won' here?

## GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Find evidences in these selections of Morris's love and intimate knowledge of Nature.
2. Does the medieval setting of *Jason* improve or spoil the story for modern readers ? Give reasons.
3. 'Morris's poetry never rises to any great height, but is hardly ever trivial.' Criticise this view with references to the text.
4. Is a miraculous element essential to Romance ? Consider this with reference to the part it plays in *Jason*.
5. Choose two scenes which appeal strongly to you, one from the pictorial, the other from the emotional point of view. Describe them in your own words and give reasons for your choice.
6. Compile a list of words, phrases and grammatical forms that are borrowed from Chaucer.
7. Is Morris's conscious imitation of Chaucer a merit or a defect or both ? Give reasons.
8. Suggest some striking differences between *Jason* and the *Canterbury Tales*.
9. What is your estimate of Morris as a story-teller ?
10. Write a character of Jason.
11. Who deserves our sympathy more, Medea or Jason ? Give your reasons.
12. 'While Jason and Medea are working out their destinies as it were on a higher plane in company with gods and demi-gods, heroes and kings, Morris never forgets the common people with their hopes and fears, their simple pleasures and sorrows—emotions which touch a responsive chord in the hearts of mere mortals.' Explain and expand this statement, with special references to passages in the text which bear out its truth.
13. 'Men are but puppets of the gods.' Discuss this as a justifiable moral to the story.
14. Describe an incident in (a) Hakluyt's Voyages, or (b) Captain Scott's Antarctic Expedition, in the metre and style of *Jason*.
15. Compare Morris's treatment of the Heroic couplet in *Jason* with that of Dryden in *Absalom and Achitophel*, of Pope in the *Essay on Man* and of Keats in *Endymion*.

## GLOSSARY OF ARCHAIC WORDS

Adown	· down, downwards (cf. anear, anigh).	Hardihead	: hardihood (cf. <i>goodlihead</i> , etc.).
athwart	across.	hecatomb	: sacrifice of a hun- dred beasts.
aumbrye	: cupboard.	Lordship	: estate, demesne.
Bale-fire	: beacon	lore	: learning.
bane	: harm, destruction (adj. baneful).	Meed	· reward.
bent, n.	: grass	Natheless	: nevertheless.
best, vb.	· press	neat	: oxen.
busk, vb.	: busy.	Press, n	: crowd.
Cinnabar	: vermillion.	Quaggy	: marshy.
Dight	· arrayed	Rack	: driving clouds.
drouth	: dryness, thirst.	reck	: care.
Eld	: age.	reft	: bereft
endlong	: lengthways, along.	rout	: merry company.
enow	: enough.	Sedge	: reeds.
erewhile	: formerly.	sere-cloth	· shroud.
erst	: of old.	shallop	: skiff, dinghy.
Fain	: desirous.	shard	: broken pottery.
fell, n.	: hide.	soothly	: truly.
fell, adj	: dread.	stead	: place.
fillet	: band.	stilt	: handle.
flaw	: squall	sward	: lawn.
Gainful	: profitable.	Wain	: waggon.
gobbet	: lump.	weed	: clothes.
grisly	: fearful, horrible.	wrack	: wreck, ruin.
guerdon	: reward.		

## GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

.Æa	a town in Colchis at the mouth of R. Phasis.
Æaea	location unknown: probably an island in the straits between Sicily and the toe of Italy.
Ætolia	a district in N. Greece W. of Thessaly.
Anaurus	a stream rising in Mt Pelion and flowing into the Gulf of Pagasæ.
Arcadia	a district in the centre of the Peloponnese.
Argos	a city in the N.E. of the Peloponnese.
Caria	a district in the S.W. of Asia Minor.
Cenchrææ	one of the ports of Corinth.
Cimbria	modern Denmark.
Colchis	a district to the E. of the Black Sea S. of the Caucasus: modern Georgia.
Corinth	a city on the Isthmus joining N. Greece with the Peloponnese.
Cyzicum	a town on the S. coast of the Propontis or Sea of Marmora.
Dēlos	an island in the Ægean Sea.
Dodōna	in Epirus; the seat of an oracle of Jupiter whose answers were interpreted from the rustle of the leaves in an oak-wood.
Enna	a town in the centre of Sicily.
Eubœa	a long narrow island off the E. coast of Northern Greece.
Hellespont	modern Dardanelles.
Heraclēa	a town on the S. coast of the Black Sea.
Iolchos	a town in Thessaly on the Gulf of Pagasæ.
Ismēnus	a river in Boeotia, a district in Central Greece N.W. of Attica.
Lacedæmon	a district in the S.E. of the Peloponnese.
Lemnos	an island in the Ægean Sea, roughly half-way between the coast of Thessaly and the Dardanelles.
Magnesia	a district of Thessaly in which Mt. Pelion and Iolchos stand.
Malēa	the southernmost cape of the Peloponnese.
Miletus (adj. Milesian)	a town on the coast of Caria S.W. of Asia Minor.

Mysia	a district in the N.W. corner of Asia Minor.
Pelion	a high mountain-peak in Thessaly near the sea-coast.
Phœacia	an island off Epirus—W. coast of Northern Greece.
Phasis	a river in Colchis.
Pontus	a district in N.E. Asia Minor on the S. coast of the Black Sea ; also used as equivalent to the Pontus Euxinus, <i>i.e.</i> the Black Sea.
Propontis	modern Sea of Marmora.
Salmydessus	a town in Thrace on the W. coast of the Black Sea ; wrongly imagined by W. Morris to be on the N. coast of the Propontis.
Strōphädes	small islands off the W. coast of the Peloponnes.
Stygian stream or Styx	one of the rivers of the lower world.
Symplēgādēs	generally supposed to be situated at the Bosphorus, <i>i.e.</i> W. outlet of Black Sea.
Thebes	the capital of Boeotia ( <i>vid.</i> Ismenus).
Trinacria	modern Sicily (lit. the three-cornered land).

## NAMES OF PEOPLE

(*N.B.*—Names of the Argonauts are in italics ; little is known of many of them.)

Absyrtus	brother of Medea
Æetes	king of Colchis, father of Absyrtus and Medea.
Æson	son of Cretheus, second king of Iolchos and father of Jason.
Alcimida	wife of Æson and mother of Jason.
Alcmena	the mother of Hercules by Jupiter.
Arcas	son of Jupiter and Callisto ; became on his death the constellation of Areturus
Asclepius	the god of medicine. The Roman <i>Esculapius</i> .
Asterion	
Atalanta	granddaughter of Minyas. When a babe she was exposed on the hills by her father and was suckled by a bear.
Athamas	king of Thebes, to whom Neptune gave the ram with the Golden Fleece.
Bacchus	god of wine and revelry.
Butes	an Athenian : rescued from the Sirens by Venus.
Ceneus	a Thessalian woman turned into a man by Neptune.
Chiron	a centaur (half-man, half-horse) : lived on the slopes of Mt. Pelion and there instructed Achilles and other famous heroes in the arts and manly virtues.
Circē	the most famous sorceress in Greek mythology : she turned her visitors into animals.
Creon	king of Corinth, cousin to Jason.
Cretheus	first king of Iolchos, father of Æson.
Cyzicus	king of Cyzicum.
Dædalus	a great artist-craftsman : built the Labyrinth at Crete and constructed wings with which he flew over the Aegean. The adj. Dædalian is used to describe any work marked by skilful or curious design or craftsmanship.
Diana	goddess of hunting : in heaven she was Luna, the moon ; in Hades, Hecate. The Greek <i>Artemis</i> .
Echion	son of Hermes.
Eribôtes	a physician, brother of Butes.

Glaucē	daughter of Creon, king of Corinth : generally called Creusa.
Hecate	the goddess of magic (see under Diana).
<i>Hercules</i>	son of Jupiter and Alcmena : compelled by Jupiter to serve Eurystheus who imposed upon him the twelve tasks. The Greek <i>Heracles</i>
Hermes	messenger of the gods : the Roman <i>Mercury</i> .
Hesperides	the daughters of Hesperus, the evening star ; reputed to have lived on the N.W. coast of Africa near Mt. Atlas ; Morris makes them live further east near Carthage.
<i>Hylas</i>	a young Theban, son of Theodamas.
Iris	goddess of the rainbow ; messenger to the gods.
Juno	queen of the gods : the Greek <i>Hera</i> .
Jupiter	king of the gods : the Greek <i>Zeus</i>
<i>Lynceus</i>	son of the king of Messene, a town in the Peloponnese ; his name means keen-eyed.
Mars	god of war : the Greek <i>Ares</i> .
Médæa	daughter of Æetes, king of Colchis : a sorceress.
Metharmoë	a Colchian woman whose identity was assumed by Juno.
Minos	king of Crete : on his death made one of the three supreme judges in Hades.
Minyæ	the descendants of Minyas : their original home was Beotia ; one branch of the family settled at Iolchos.
<i>Nauplius</i>	a son of Neptune.
Neptune	god of the sea : the Greek <i>Poseidon</i> .
Nereüs	a sea-god : son of Oceanus.
<i>Nestor</i>	son of Peleus : took part in the Trojan war and lived to a very great age.
Œäger	father of Orpheus and king of Thrace.
<i>Orpheus</i>	son of Œager : the most famous poet and minstrel of the heroic age.
Pelias	son of Tyro by a river-god : half-brother to Æson, whose throne he usurped.
Phineüs	king of Salmydessus.
<i>Phlias</i>	son of Bacchus and Ariadne.
Phryxus	son of Athamas and Nephele and sister to Helle : destined for sacrifice by Ino, Athamas's second wife ; he escaped with his sister on the back of the golden-fleeced ram, which carried him to Colchis : here he was treacherously slain by Æetes.
Saturn	father of Jupiter, who expelled him from heaven : settled in Latium in Italy, where his reign was marked by so much contentment and prosperity that later generations referred to it as the Golden Age.

Sirens	sea-nymphs who lived in an island in the strait between Italy and Sicily. They beguiled passing sailors with their entrancing songs and lured them to forget everything until they perished of starvation.
<i>Theseūs</i>	son of a king of Athens : killed the Minotaur with the aid of Minos' daughter Ariadne, whom he deserted on the island of Naxos.
<i>Tiphys</i>	a Boeotian : helmsman of the Argo.
Tyro	wife of Cretheus and mother of Pelias by a river-god.
Venus	goddess of love. The Greek <i>Aphrodite</i> .

NOTE.—It was customary at the time Morris wrote to Latinise Greek proper names and to give the gods and goddesses of Greek mythology their corresponding names in Roman mythology. Morris, however, was not consistent and is occasionally inaccurate; e.g. he should have written *Iolcus* for *Iolchos* and *Cheiron* for *Chiron*, and he uses the Greek *Asclepius* and *Hermes* for their Roman equivalents *Esculapius* and *Mercury*. To avoid confusion, Morris's spelling and nomenclature are retained throughout this book.

## THE SOURCES OF THE STORY

THE Quest of the Golden Fleece is perhaps the oldest of Greek myths. The original epic, if indeed it was ever committed to writing, has been lost, but what is probably an abstract of it is preserved in the *Bibliotheca* of Apollodorus (fl. c. 110 B.C.), and there are countless references to the story in Classical Literature. The Greek lyric poet Pindar (fl. c. 475 B.C.) gives a short, vivid account in one of the *Pythian Odes*; but by far the most complete account is in the *Argonautica* of the great Alexandrine scholar Apollonius Rhodius (fl. c. 210 B.C.), a long epic in Homeric hexameters. Many of the side incidents are dealt with by Ovid (43 B.C.-A.D. 17) in the *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses*.

The versions that have come down to us differ in various details and Morris did not follow any one consistently. He interpolated incidents for which there is no authority; he invented a new route for the Argonauts' return journey, and he made an attempt to rationalise the rather vague geography of the original story. The main divergencies from the usually accepted version are as follows :

1. The Argonauts were supposed to have spent a year on the island of Lemnos and mated with the women there. Morris omits this incident altogether.

2. In the flight from Æa, Medea is supposed to have taken her brother Absyrtus on board the Argo with her, and when they were nearing the Crimea, with her father close on their heels, she is said to have slain him, cut up his body into pieces and scattered them in the wake of the ship to delay the pursuit of Æetes. In Morris's version Absyrtus's ship is rammed by the Argo and he himself killed by Jason's spear.

3. Pindar makes the heroes return from Æa up the river Phasis and via the Red Sea by a southerly route; the other authorities via the Danube, across the Alps and down one of the tributaries of the Po into the Adriatic. Morris's route is up the Dnieper and Pripyat and down the Vistula into the Baltic.

The incidents of Jason's boyhood in Book I are mainly Morris's own invention, and Book XVII, which deals with Jason's after-life at Corinth, is founded on the *Medea*, a tragedy of Euripides (first performed 431 B.C.).

## HINTS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The *Collected Works of William Morris*, with an introduction by his daughter, May Morris (24 vols., Longmans), is the standard Library Edition of his works.

The *Life and Death of Jason*, in the latest revised edition, is published in a cheap handy form in Longmans' *Pocket Library*. The second edition has been reprinted in the *World's Classics* by the Oxford Press.

The *Life of William Morris* by J. W. Mackail (2 vols., Longmans) is the authorised, and by far the best and most comprehensive biography. *William Morris* by Alfred Noyes (Macmillan's *English Men of Letters*) is shorter and is confined mainly to Morris's poetical work. There is a separate chapter devoted to *Jason*. *William Morris* by A. C. Brock (Home Univ. Library) deals with his ideas and their influence on the times.

For minor references to Morris's life and work, see the Lives of his friends—*Edward Burne-Jones* by Lady Burne-Jones (Macmillan), and *Rossetti* by A. C. Benson (Macmillan's *English Men of Letters*), and *Ancient Lights* by Ford Madox Hueffer (Chapman & Hall), which contains many entertaining stories of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. There are two short articles, profusely illustrated, on Morris's work in *The Bookman* for Feb. 1911, and in *Four Poets* by Stopford Brooke (Duckworth's *Readers' Library*) there is an admirable, if too laudatory, criticism of his poetry.

The *Life and Death of Jason* is reviewed by Algernon Swinburne in a volume of his *Essays and Studies* (Chatto and Windus).

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